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The Recycling of Identity in a Postmodern Age

by

Anju Anand

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requirements for the degree of Masters of Education

in

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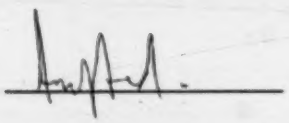

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled The Recycling of Identity in a Postmodern Age submitted by Anju Anand in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Education in Counselling Psychology.

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Abstract

This thesis explores "identity" in an age of media saturation, information technologies, economic restructuring and crumbling institutions and ideologies. A comparison of developmental -psychological theories with a political economy perspective on youth exposes the traditional understanding of identity formation / confusion as lacking in a postmodern age. However, deficiencies in the political economy perspective call for an exploration of postmodern theories that posit an even greater influence of the social world. After rejecting postmodern theories that call for the obliteration of the self, the author reviews theories that reflect both a favorable and not so favorable outlook on the influence of postmodern changes. The applicability of these different outlooks is "tested out" in an analysis of popular representations of youth and youth consumption. The thesis concludes with suggestions for how the teacher or counsellor can help facilitate the young person's complex negotiation of identity.

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, Savinder Anand. For all of the hardships she suffered so that I could make my own identity.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE 1

Culture and Psyche 1

Why Youth 1
How Old is Young 2
Which Youth? 3

CHAPTER TWO 6

Psychology and Sociology 6

The Political Economy of Youth 6
Erikson versus the Political Economy View 7
Marcia versus the Political Economy View 11
Elkind versus the Political Economy View 13
Piaget versus the Political Economy View 16
Kohlberg versus the Political Economy View 19
Gilligan versus the Political Economy View 20
Bandura versus the Political Economy View 22
Sebald versus the Political Economy View 24
From Found Self to Made Self 29

CHAPTER THREE 32

Postmodern Identities 32

What is Modernism? 32
What is Postmodernism? 34
Clearing a Path 36
Seeing through the Self 39
Seeing through the Author 39
The Death of the Self? 41
Falling and Swimming 45
Falling Apart 46
The Empty Self 46
The Minimal Self 47
The Totalistic Self 49
The Disordered Self 50
Commentary 52

Swimming Even Wallowing 55
The Pastiche Self 56
The Protean Self 57
The Narrative Self 59
The Relational Self 60
Commentary 61
Growing Up Postmodern 69

CHAPTER FOUR 71

Bought and Sold 71

Threats, Victims and Symbols 71
Falling not Swimming 75
Not Drowning but Waving 85

CHAPTER FIVE 92

Translating and Recycling 92

Implications for Youth Workers 92
The Recycling of Identity 94

REFERENCES 96

Chapter One **Culture and Psyche**

We emerge from our mother's womb an formatted diskette: our culture format us.
Douglas Coupland, Polaroids from the Dead

My initial research question for this thesis was "How can we understand identity in our current cultural environment?" I came to this topic as a result of having completed a paper on adolescent identity for a course in adolescent development. My paper topic was motivated by my reading of the work of two sociologists, James Côté and Anton Allahar, who proposed a social-structural theory of youth identity. This perspective on youth identity departed significantly from the perspectives typical to developmental psychology. I was attracted to their theory because of the attention it paid to current realities of young people's social world. These realities, which include experiences with unemployment, media saturation and communication technologies, are for the most part unacknowledged in the psychological literature. However, upon completing this paper, I still felt that there were many issues left unaddressed and others that were insufficiently addressed by both the sociological and psychological understandings that were the focus of my paper. Thus my initial investigation into the subject convinced me of the importance of studying the formation of identity in this period of rapid social change.

In my further investigations into how social processes are influencing identity, I found that the material being reflected in disciplines other than psychology and in the media were providing me with a more adequate vocabulary to address some of these issues. The kind of understandings that I gained about identity from these sources are associated with the form of thinking known as postmodernism. However, as a result of my immersion in postmodern ideas, I came to realize that my investigation could not be limited to trying to complete the incomplete puzzles offered by psychology or social-structural theory. Rather, it became apparent that if I was to take the influence of the socius on the self as seriously as postmodern theorists do, I need also to be asking questions about the intelligiblity of the very notion of identity within these times. And with identity being the sacred object of psychology, the very basis around which the discipline itself becomes intelligible, I was also of necessity asking whether psychologists can have anything useful left to say about the human condition.

In light of the questions I raise here, I believe that this study would be of interest to anyone seeking to understand the experience of young people and identity. Indeed, in light of the last question, it may be of interest to anyone seeking to understand any experience that we currently label as being psychological.

Why youth?

Young people are the focus of this study on identity for two reasons. First, adolescence has traditionally been thought of as the time for identity exploration and formation. Our dominant understanding of identity formation comes, in particular, from the

psychological theories of Erik Erikson and Jean Piaget. For Erikson and Piaget, adolescence is the time in which the culture transmits their important learnings to the next generation. In particular, it is during the late teen years that the child becomes cognitively ready to receive these learnings (Piaget, 1958) and is provided a time to question them (Erikson, 1968). Second, youth are also the focus of this study because they often represent the coming trend for adult experience. Young people, as a group, have more experience with aspects of the culture that are promoting changes in the way we understand identity. They are more engaged with media and information technologies and experience greater amounts of leisure time (Reimer, 1995). Moreover the notion that youth represent the coming trend in adult experience may be more true than ever given that social processes have increasingly problematized the meaning of adulthood. The concept of adulthood is being rendered problematic by the fact that many of the traditionally significant transitions into adulthood, such as getting a job, are now increasingly difficult for many youth to participate in (Wyn & White, 1997). This increased blurring between adolescents and adults is elaborated in the following section.

How Old is Young?

For the purposes of this study, I use the aforementioned rationale behind the traditional association of identity with late adolescence (16-19), as my rationale for setting the late teen years as my lower boundary of what constitutes youth. However, I do not limit my focus to these ages on account of some important limitations of this perspective. One such limitation is the inconclusiveness of research findings with respect to when the capacity for critical thought actually emerges. As Kuhn (1979) notes, there remains considerable debate as to whether many adults ever achieve this capacity, let alone teenagers. There is also debate as to when the most important learnings in a culture are transmitted to young people as well as whether there exist any univeral trends in this regard (Baumeister, 1986).

Furthermore, as James (cited in Skelton & Valentine, 1998), notes, in social practice, the range of age taken to be youth has far less to do with biological underpinnings than social control: the "boundaries of exclusion [from adulthood]" (p.5) which define the teenage years are boundaries which "define what young people are not, cannot do, or cannot be"(p5). In his view, the age of the physical body of adolescents is invoked in common defintions of youth to "define, control and order" (p.5) the actions of young people. If we accept that what we take as our boundaries of youth has more to do with when adult society permits youth to assume adult privileges, then we must accept a much more extended range of years beyond late adolescence in our definition of what constitutes youth. For factors such as the pervasiveness of unemployment / underemployment in people in their twenties and thirties have led some youth researchers to suggest that these individuals are experiencing a prolonged adolescence (Wyn & White, 1997).

The influence of other social processes also suggests that the upper boundary of an age range for youth should be constructed well up into the young adult years. For example, the fashion and leisure industries are increasingly targeting those in their adult years with identity-conferring products that have traditionally been marketed to teenagers (Wyn & White, 1997).

In light of these considerations of the social processes affecting youth, it would be inappropriate to use a strict classification of biological age to construct boundaries around the category of youth. Rather, for the purposes of this study, the category of youth includes both those who are at the end of their teen years as well as those who would, in legal terms, be considered young adults.

Which Youth?

Given the limitations of an understanding of youth based strictly on biological classifications, I propose that youth is more usefully conceptualized as an "age-related process" (Wyn & White, 1997, p.8). In this framework, the focus is on the construction of youth through social processes, such as schooling, over the inherent characteristics of young people. However seeing "youth" as a process throws into question the very use of the universal term "youth". As previously noted, the young are neither a homogenous nor static group in terms of age. Nor are they homogeneous with respect to gender, race, nationality or class variables which inform their experiences as young people. In fact, these variables can and often do have more influence on young people's lives than their age does. Liebau and Chisholm (cited in Wyn & White,1997), for example, conclude that the category of "European youth" (p.9) cannot exist because in different regions, European adolescents negotiate different circumstances that are shaped both by the material, objective aspects of their cultures and the ways in which they subjectively interpret their experiences.

However, in spite of these differences, there remain some very obvious commonalities that exist among groups of young people. For example, the global pervasiveness of the Western mass media and new communication technologies create at least a superficial sameness among youth all over the world (Reimer, 1995). Youth living in the advanced industrial nations are being subjected to longer periods of education and are experiencing the failure of youth labour markets (Wyn & White, 1997).

These observations about the commonalities and differences that constitute the realities of young people's lives have led some to conclude that the only meaningful way that one can do research about youth is through the following framework of understanding. Because of their particular circumstances, young people are going to experience the things they hold in common with other young people differently (Wyn & White, 1997). For example, a black teenager in a North American urban ghetto would have a different experience of the failure of youth labour markets than his or her white middle class counterpart. While at times I draw attention to how race, class and other variables should qualify this investigation of young people's experiences, I have not limited my study to a very narrow group of young people, as is commonly done by researchers who adhere to the above understanding.

In the absence of my focusing on a particular group of young people, it would be logical for the reader to assume that this study must only have direct applicability to Western, middle class youth. Readers may make this assumption because most youth research has taken this group as its focus (Griffin, 1996). Or they may assume this because of this group's access to the leisure products, technologies and higher education that are

discussed in this study. They may also make this assumption on account of the idea that those who have to be concerned with physical survival would presumably be less likely to experience the kinds of existential perils that affect the elite. (Smith, 1994).

However, the kind of commonalities occuring among young people in these times lead to an expansion of the youth groups that this study could pertain to. For example, the globalizing influence of Western mass media could have an even larger impact on African youth living in shanty towns, where a TV and radio are found in almost every shack and is rarely turned off (Lemert, 1997). Similarly, young people from more impoverished backgrounds may be even more influenced by mass media messages because their lack of money forces them to seek a larger percentage of their entertainment in the private sphere through television (Reimer, 1995). Moreover, as Giddens (1991) notes the possibilities that are denied to such individuals because of economic deprivation are experienced differently from the possibilities that are denied to one through the frameworks of tradition. That is, relative to this kind of limitation, the possiblities that one is denied by being poor are still experienced as just that : possibilities. Giddens' point is that even though these individuals may not have access to the luxuries of the elite, they are nevertheless confronted with the same reality of a multitude of options for how one should form an identity. A lower class teen, however constricted his or her life, will nevertheless know about information affecting young people in general, and his or her own activities will almost certainly be modified to some extent by that knowledge. The kind of violence that has erupted among American black youths over Nike running shoes could be seen as an example of this. In this case, lower class teens appear to be just as sensitive to mass media messages about forming an identity through the consumption of fashions as more privileged youth are. In fact, concern with how to construct the self may be even more pronounced in the lives of underprivileged youth. In some circumstances of poverty, the fact that the hold of tradition has been more thoroughly disintegrated than within middle class society may create an even greater need to creatively construct one's self (Giddens, 1991).

Yet there may be some readers who would suggest that my concern with the concept of identity itself imposes a severe limit on which youth I am speaking about. This position stems from a belief that identity only becomes a concern to those who think about these issues, combined with a belief that few young people, or even older people, would fall into this category (Baumeister, 1986). However, it is precisely the new social climate that we live in that seems to have caused people to become more concerned with self-knowledge and more self-reflective than in many previous eras. Anderson (1995a) observes that in this era, concerns over identity have clearly moved from the domain of philosohers to that of the masses. He attributes this shift to the fact that our experience of the plurality of options presented to us in our media-saturated culture causes us to increasingly sense the limitations of any discourse that we are participating in. As a result, one cannot avoid confronting the questions that this process would invariably raise about how to be a person. Giddens (1991) observes that whereas identity could be easily assumed in cultures where things stayed more or less the same, in this climate of rapid social change, the reflexive construction of the self is a "general feature of modern social activity" as opposed to being confined to life crises.

In sum, I can come to no easy conclusion about which groups of young people (or older people), the reader should see this work as encompassing. I can only suggest that he or she keep the above considerations in mind while reading.

I have created this text to follow the course that I took in trying to answer the initial research question: How can we understand identity in our current cultural environment? In the following chapter, I compare psychological theories with the social-structural theory of Côté and Allahar (1994). Côté and Allahar's theory acts as a bridge from traditional psycho-social understandings of identity to the more radical views of the self, discussed in chapter three. In chapter three, I explore postmodern theories of the self that press beyond Côté and Allahar in terms of the degree and type of influence that the social exerts on identity. After rejecting postmodern theories that advocate the demise of the self, I review two sets of theories, that reflect both a positive and negative evaluation, respectively, of the effects of postmodern changes on the self. In chapter four, I go outside the scholarly discourses to contemplate another way in which understandings of identity are shaped. I look at the ways in which youth are represented in media along with some of the "identity products" (e.g., fashion and music) which they consume. I borrow from the vocabulary of the academic theories to provide a thematic analysis of these popular and alternative culture forms. The final chapter is a reflection on the educational and counselling implications of what I have learned about youth identity.

Chapter Two **Psychology and Sociology**

In the social jungle of human existence, there is no feeling of being alive without a sense of identity.

Erik Erikson, Identity, Youth and Crisis

In James Côté and Anton Allahar's (1994) theory of identity, social arrangements account for much of what psychologists ascribe to the unfolding of inner processes. Côté and Allahar's theory utilizes the framework of political economy. In this chapter, I contrast their political economy perspective with the psychological perspectives of Erik Erikson, James Marcia, David Elkind, Jean Piaget, Lawrence Kolhberg, Carol Gilligan, Albert Bandura and Hans Sebald. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Côté and Allahar's theory serves as a bridge between the dominant understanding of identity, as communicated in the aforementioned developmental theories, and the more radical postmodern perspectives, discussed in the next chapter. A description of the points of convergence and divergence between each of the psychological theories and the political economy theory is followed by a critical commentary on the strengths and weaknesses of each.

The Political Economy of Youth

The political economy view of youth is derived from the more general political economy perspective, held by writers such as Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman. The essence of any political economy perspective is that those who control power must ensure that subordinate classes do not rebel against the existing socio-economic order. To ensure that members of a subordinate class do not rebel, they must be kept oblivious of the fact that they are essential to the system. In capitalist societies, economically subordinate classes must remain unaware that they constitute the cheap labor and consumer markets that dominant forces exploit for their gain. Dominant forces "manufacture [the] consent" (Côté & Allahar, 1994, p.107) of their subordinates through subtle ideological control; convincing groups to undertake actions that work against their interests obviates the need for control though physical force. This process of being convinced through ideological means to "love one's servitude" (p.132) is what political economists are referring to when they speak about the inculcation of false consciousness as being one of the most effective ways by which a more powerful class maintains its dominance. Côté and Allahar see young people as constituting a subordinate class, in light of their low earning power and high unemployment. Young people constitute cheap labor and consumer markets, in their roles as service industry workers and primary purchasers of music, fashion, and leisure products. The authors contend that young people are conditioned into false consciousness about their condition, primarily through indoctrination from the mass media and education system.

Côté and Allahar (1994) link the political economy theory with the process of identity formation by asserting that young people's marginalization from adult society[1] causes them to hunger for an identity. This need for identity is exploited by social agents such as the media, who indoctrinate young people into adopting a superficial and tenuous means of identity formation. The media encourages young people to realize their identities by identifying with consumer images and products. This exploitation is possible because more viable means of identity formation are denied youth through their exclusion from meaningful economic roles.

Erikson versus The Political Economy View

Points of Convergence

Côté and Allahar (1994) combine the political economy view of youth with some of Erik Erikson's (1968) concepts concerning identity formation. The authors make particular use of the notion of ego, which Erikson maintained from Freud's psychology. According to Erikson's theory, the ego is the psychic structure which allows human beings to develop the competencies associated with being an active social agent. Côté and Allahar draw upon Erikson's ideas of how the ego acquires strength. They do this in their explanation of how young people's social and economic marginalization affects their development. The authors argue against the current practice of subjecting young people to long periods of childlike dependency in schools, because, as Erikson maintained, "if the ego is prevented from actively engaging with its environment, the ensuing frustration can damage it, especially if the frustration continues for a period and / or lacks meaning for the ego" (cited in Côté & Allahar, p.73). However, Côté and Allahar also acknowledge that a postponement of adult roles can be beneficial for youth. They express some support for Erikson's view of the moratorium. The moratorium is a "time out" from or delay of adult commitments and responsibilities, in which the young person can receive support and opportunities for role experimentation that facilitate the development of his or her identity. Côté and Allahar agree with Erikson's view that the moratorium can be highly beneficial for youth who can engage in activities like travel. These activities allow for self-exploration in ways that cannot be done in mainstream society.

Similarly, Erikson's (1968) belief that personal identity depends upon the support of the social environment appears to be a point which Côté and Allahar would support. The personal or ego identity (as Erikson calls it) is the sense of "personal sameness and historical continuity" (p.17) that provides the individual with the resources needed to synthesize conflicting information about the self. Erikson (1959) maintains that the ego identity

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[1] By marginalization, these authors are referring to the dual processes of disconnection that many young people experience from institutions centered around production and the social and psychological experiences of disempowerment that accompany this disconnection. The impact of occupational restructuring in advanced industrial countries has been to relegate young people to the margins of production as evidenced by their occupation of service industry jobs. This outsider status results in feelings of low self-confidence, alienation and identity concerns.

depends for validation on a supportive environment that engages the individual in roles which enable exploration of his or her abilities. This assumption appears to fit with Côté and Allahar's (1994) observation that being locked into the circumscribed roles of student and service worker adversely affects young people's emotional well-being. These authors cite research findings which suggest that young people of the late 1970's and early 1980's were "more worried about their future and less hopeful about their ability to function as adults" (p.62) than their 1960's counterparts.

As well, Côté and Allahar (1994) would likely agree with Erikson's (1968) views on the role of the social environment in the experience of an identity crisis. An identity crisis occurs "when the adolescent cannot find someone (or something) to believe in, or to attach himself to" (Mitchell, 1985, p.33). Erikson (1968) sees Biff's character in Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman as illustrating just such a crisis: "I just can't take hold, ma, I can't take hold of some kind of life" (p.131). Erikson maintains that one of the conditions that must be present for an identity crisis to occur is that cultural factors have to be pushing the individual towards an identity resynthesis. The crisis may be aggravated by a sense of meaninglessness created by an insufficiently regulated, unrewarding social environment. Côté and Allahar provide an example of how such an environment can precipitate an identity crisis. They do this in their observation that identity confusion may be stimulated by the now common situation in which university educated youth face structural unemployment.

Although Erikson (1968) sees cultural factors as playing a role in the onset of the identity crisis, he believes that the actual crisis takes place at the unconscious level. The development of the ego causes one to be unable to accept at a conscious level how the world in which he or she lives as an adolescent differs from what he or she had internalized that world ought to be like, during childhood, as part of his or her superego (cited in Côté & Levine, 1987). Thus the identity crisis engages the individual in an intense battle between his or her ego and superego. Although the political economy perspective does not make reference to unconscious processes, the theory of identity confusion that proceeds from it fits well with Erikson's description of the identity crisis. The individualism and material success that Côté and Allahar (1994) see youth as having been taught to value through the media and education system, could be read as the childhood ideologies that youth become unable to accept. They are unable to reconcile their current disenfranchisement with these early beliefs. Côté and Allahar suggest that youth are indoctrinated into valuing individualism and materialism because such values prevent youth from developing an interest in social responsibility. This interest is crucial to their ablility to mobilize against their oppression.

Points of Divergence

Erikson (1968) sees the conflicting self-images and aspirations that are manifestations of identity confusion as resulting from the inability of young people to make decisions about such things as occupation. Young people are seen to have difficulty with such decisions because society presents them with too many conflicting possibilities and choices. In contrast, Côté and Allahar (1994) argue that the lack of demonstrated commitment to careers on the part of young people is more a reflection of the fact that today's secondary schools do not prepare them for specific occupations. They maintain that

schools function primarily as "holding pens", because there is no place for youth in the workforce. The occupational restructuring of the last few decades has resulted in fewer job opportunities being made available to young people.

Erikson (1968) also sees adolescents' involvement with fads and their overidentification with entertainment heroes as being a reflection of their inability to settle on choices, when confronted with too many possibilities. However, Côté and Allahar (1994) see young people's fad behaviour as being a product of their vulnerability to the superficial means of identity formation that the media encourages. That is, youth engage with fads because they are told they can form their identities by consuming the "identity products" (e.g., music, fashion) and celebrity images that the media attempts to sell them. Similarly, they see young people's overidentification with sports and film heroes as a product of the fact that young people are presented, through the media, with false "rags to riches stories" that fuel their dreams of becoming like celebrities. Côté and Allahar argue that modern[2] sports is the "real-life analogue ... [of] capitalist ideology" where there is the belief that "all players begin the game at the same starting point, but the most talented finish first"(p.140). The reality of capitalism, however, is that not everyone has the same starting point. For example, native youth do not start off with the same advantages as white youth. Thus the rags to riches stories act to preserve the notion that success or failure is completely a function of individual effort. This notion prevents youth from mobilizing against their oppression.

While Côté and Allahar (1994) believe that the moratorium can be a useful experience, they do not agree with Erikson's (1968) view that the moratorium is always benign and necessary for identity development. Erikson sees the moratorium as being the time in which youth can receive both ideological and practical support for the task of identity formation. However, the degree of support one receives varies depending on which social ideology one chooses to base one's identity on. Erikson maintains that youth who base their identities on the dominant technological ethos of their society[3] and on their involvement in technological institutions (e.g., apprenticeships) receive substantial practical and ideological support for their identity formation. However, more "humanistic" (Côté & Levine, 1987, p.290) youth, who reject the dominant mentality, and involve themselves with socially marginal activities are provided with much less support. In contrast, Côté and Allahar suggest that whether the moratorium is a benefit or liability depends on the individual's environment, in ways that Erikson fails to consider. They maintain that youth who cannot make use of the moratorium due to limited resources may become prone to feelings of meaninglessness and confusion. The "time out" for young people who cannot afford elaborate self-exploration experiences like travel must take place in their home communities. These environments can provide relatively few supports for identity formation. Thus the delay of adulthood for less affluent youth can amount to a noninstrumental and potentially harmful postponement from meaningful, adult roles.

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[2] The term modern here refers to the ideology of modernism. An explanation of modernism can be found in chapter three.

[3] This ethos is characterized the maxims "you become what you do" and "what works is good" (cited in Côté & Levine, 1987)

Commentary

Some of Erikson's (1968) views on the moratorium no longer seem applicable to today's youth. Few work apprenticeships still exist for young people. Moreover, it can be argued that in the absence of apprenticeships, the dominant site of socialization for today's "technological" youth is the same as that for "humanistic" youth: the university (Côté & Levine, 1987). The lesser degree of support for identity that more of today's youth experience from the university, as a "non-technological" institution, suggests that the high degree of optimism with which Erikson regards the moratorium may no longer be warranted. Erikson's optimistic view of the moratorium is also challenged by the current reality of "credentialism". Côté and Allahar (1994) argue that modern universities' support for the notion that higher levels of educational credentials are necessary to prepare oneself for jobs, results in an unfair and frustrating prolongation of adolescence. These authors see credentialism as unfair because for many jobs the amount of academic training currently required may be unnecessary.

Erikson's (1968) view of identity-confused youth as unable to choose among all the opportunities laid before them fails to fit with the fact that many of today's youth are being denied meaningful roles. They also often have no choice but to take the opportunities which arise. The lack of applicability of Erikson's view for today's youth is most likely a function of the times in which he was writing.

Côté and Allahar (1994) fail to consider the liberatory potential of schooling for youth. The fact that longer periods of higher education can be experienced as economically oppressive does not preempt the significant personal, social and intellectual development which can be gained from college and university experiences. In their focus on economics, these authors overlook the value of schooling simply for gaining knowledge of the world or for pursuing a passion for a particular subject. The university can also facilitate the development of oppositional thinking. This way of thinking is vital to young people's ability to mobilize against their oppression. Moreover, individual young people are not being wholly excluded from job opportunities as a result of their prolonged schooling. On the contrary, in view of the increasing legitimate need for highly specialized skills in the areas of science and technology, extended periods of training are necessary for both getting a job and being able to perform in it.

Côté and Allahar's (1994) belief that the schools promote values that are increasingly difficult for youth to realize is also open to question. These writers suggest, for example, that while schools promote individuality, the only way that is made available for youth to realize this trait is by consuming mass-produced products. However the assumption that "the appetite for individuality persists, but the possibility for acheiving it has been greatly reduced" (Baumeister, 1985, p.87) remains a matter of debate. It could even be argued that living in this era makes being an individual easier than ever before. The popular statement "I was born to be myself" (p.91) implies that individuality is one's birthright rather than something which has to be acheived. If this is the case, then individuality should require nothing save "occassional choice and acceptance" (p.91). Baumeister notes that it is not surprising that individuality should take this form in an era in which advertising teaches

that identity follows from the possession of goods. Rather than seeing consumption as the last route available for youth to acheive individuality, this perspective sees it as the exercise of an individuality that always already exists within the person.

By connecting the notion of the ego with the political economy view, Côté and Allahar (1994) avoid the deficiency of other sociological theories which overlook the human capacity for agency. However, their theory still pays insufficient attention to the role of individual choice. Young people may experience confusion as a consequence of their inability to make choices, because they struggle with whether they should base their decisions on projections about the jobs of the future. Or they may struggle with decision - making because they are balancing what they hear about the jobs of the future with the very real possibility that they will be unlikely to secure employment in whatever field they choose. These observations suggests that perhaps adolescents' lack of commitment to career goals can best be accounted for by a combination of individual and social-structural factors.

Marcia versus the Political Economy View

James Marcia (1980) developed his "ego identity status paradigm" (p.145) as a means by which Erikson's ideas about identity could be subjected to empirical study. However, in contrast to Erikson, Marcia conceives of the ego identity in purely psychological terms. For Marcia, the ego identity is "a self-structure - an internal, self-constructed, dynamic organization of drives, abilities, beliefs, and individual history" (p.159).

Marcia (1966) posits four modes of responding to the late adolescent identity stage. These modes represent "concentration points along a continuum of ego identity achievement" (p.551). These concentration points are intended to represent markers of progress towards identity achievement. The two lower ones, identity diffusion and identity foreclosure, reflect a weak ego identity. The two higher ones, identity moratorium and identity achievement, reflect a strong ego identity. The criteria for assigning individuals to one of the four identity statuses are 1) whether the individual has made commitments to a particular occupation and set of values and 2) whether the individual has been through a "crisis period". In the crisis period, the individual is seen to be actively engaged in choosing among meaningful alternatives with respect to values and careers.

The identity acheived person has undergone a crisis period, through which he or she has come to make firm commitments to an occupation and ideology. The identity moratorium individual is characterized by being in the crisis period and holding commitments that are still vague. The identity foreclosed individual is distinguished by an expression of commitments that are usually determined by one's parents or another group, such as peer group or cult, as opposed to one's self. Foreclosed individuals have not experienced a crisis. They have not evaluated possible occupational choices or ideological commitments in their own terms. Finally, the identity diffused (or identity confused) individual "has not decided on an occupation and is either uninterested in ideological matters or takes a smorgasbord approach in which one perspective is seen as being as good as another" (Marcia, 1980, p.61).

Marcia (1966) does not see the identity statuses as being developmental stages. One does not necessarily start at one status and pass through the rest in a predetermined sequence. However, he does maintain that "any movement from one status to another suggests the presence of a crisis" (p.23). This implies that all status changes must take place through the moratorium status. Once identity is acheived, the individual cannot regress to any of the other statuses.

Points of Convergence

The only point of convergence between the ego identity status paradigm and the political economy view is in the way that both theories characterize identity confused youth. For example, like Erikson, Marcia (1980) agrees with Côté and Allahar's (1994) view that identity confused individuals display a commitment to fad behavior. Empirical research on Marcia's paradigm suggests that adolescents' fad behavior serves as a way for them to escape the anxiety of their meaninglessness (Logan, 1978). Côté and Allahar would concur with this view. As mentioned previously, they see youth as gravitating towards music, fashion and celebrity images, because more meaningful ways of achieving an identity are denied to them.

Points of Divergence

Although there are some aspects of Marcia's (1980) paradigm which coincide with Erikson's (1968) theory, it is, like his definition of ego identity, decidedly psychological. As such, there are more points of divergence than convergence between his views and the political economy view. The identity crisis that Marcia (1966) refers to appears to resemble the more severe form of identity crisis that Erikson speaks of, or that Côté and Allahar (1994) refer to as chronic identity confusion. Marcia sees only those adolescents who are actively struggling to choose between alternatives as experiencing an identity crisis. However, Côté and Allahar would probably argue, as Erikson would, that individuals undergoing an identity crisis may experience varying levels of struggle. The level of struggle is dependent upon what kinds of social-structural factors are available to provide support for identity. In other words, Côté and Allahar would see Marcia's identity crisis as being the type which results from an unstructured social environment as opposed to it being the only form of crisis possible.

While Marcia (1966) sees the occupation of identity statuses as being strictly as a matter of individual deliberation[4], Côté and Allahar (1994) see social factors as influencing young people's lack of commitment to a set of values or occupation. As mentioned previously, Côté and Allahar suggest that one reason why adolescents do not make commitments to career goals is that schools fail to prepare them for occupational roles.

[4] The diffused or confused adolescent has failed to deliberate about values and possible careers as much as the moratorium adolescent.

Commentary

Marcia's (1966) failure to specify why identity can only be acheived as a consequence of a severe identity crisis is a weakness of his paradigm. His definition of identity crisis along with his seemingly pejorative description of foreclosed youth suggests that he views the questioning of societal prescriptions as being integral to identity acheivement. However, we are not told why this is the case. Perhaps, as Côté and Allahar (1994) might argue, the reason Marcia assumes such struggle is essential is because not questioning the societal prescriptions of Western societies would amount to being indoctrinated into false consciousness. Or perhaps Marcia's views are connected to the literature about valuing and believing that was prevalent when he wrote. This literature suggests that one cannot truly hold a belief unless he or she has questioned its validity.

However, such a view would seem to be applicable only to youth in Western societies. Such questioning is often not necessary and may even be dysfunctional for youth in more traditional, collective societies. Youth from these cultures simply assume viable identities by pursuing the roles that the culture lays out for them. The fact that the identity acheived status is characterized by Western ideals of autonomy and self-determination also calls into question the universality of Marcia's paradigm.

The idea that identity formation is strictly a matter of individual deliberation can be criticized on the same grounds that Erikson's (1968) point about identity confusion proceeding from the inability to make choices was criticized on. That is, this view also ignores the current reality of a lack of opportunities for young people. Marcia's (1966) own finding that identity acheived individuals can regress to the other statuses also calls this idea into question. Why would an individual who has struggled to commit to the choices he or she has made *choose* to regress to an inferior identity status? Moreover, how could he or she do so, after having firmly decided on who he or she is, at one point in time? Erikson's theory suggests that social factors may account for why identity-acheived individuals were seen to regress. Erikson sees commitment formation as being only one of the criteria upon which it can be judged that a person has adequately resolved the identity crisis. He sees transitory commitments as characteristic of the moratorium experience. These are the kinds of commitments that would be expected from youth who are experimenting with different roles. These considerations strongly suggest that Marcia fails to pay sufficient attention to the social environment.

Elkind versus the Political Economy View

Points of Convergence

David Elkind's (1984) views on adolescent identity converge with the political economy view on the idea that identity formation is hampered by the erosion of the rights and social status of youth. Both theories express concern over the less frequent observance and diminished social significance of such activities as rites of passage or "markers" (as Elkind calls them). Elkind notes that the less frequent observance of markers such as bar mitzvahs result in less responsibilities and more stress for youth because these activities

helped to give young people a clear self-definition. Côté and Allahar (1994) observe that identity development in Western societies is hindered by the lack of rites of passage, that are practiced in pre-industrial and tribal societies. These rites of passage allow youth to easily slip into identities that are based on the particular roles that the culture assigns for them.

Elkind (1984) also shares Côté and Allahar's concern (1994) over young people's identities being predicated on consumption. He refers to this process as "growth by substitution" (p.16) and calls the type of personality that is formed from it, the "patchwork self"(p.17). Elkind sees adolescents with the patchwork self as having acquired an unconnected and often conflicting set of values, attitudes and habits as a consequence of imitating ever-changing media images. He sees this type of adolescent as vulnerable to all manner of emotional difficulties. Their lack of a coherent and cohesive self causes them to experience problems in meeting the demands of their environment. Elkind argues that an adolescent with the conforming type of patchwork self often looks for a "quick fix"(p.170) from peer-group approval when faced with feelings of uncertainty and stress. They turn to their peers because they are unaware of other ways that they can acquire support for who they are. Similarly, Côté and Allahar observe that youth who are encouraged to embrace fleeting media images may become motivated to join subcultures. These subcultures may be limited in their ability to foster viable identities. For example, gangs may provide the comfort of a collective identity, but could lead to incarceration or death.

Points of Divergence

Although both theories are concerned with the media, Côté and Allahar (1994) do not share Elkind's (1984) concern about youth experiencing moral degeneration as a consequence of their heavy exposure to violence and sex in television and film. Côté and Allahar confine their critique of the media to its function of indoctrinating youth into acceptance of particular ideologies.

Similarly, although both theories view schools as hampering identity development, they do so for very different reasons. Elkind (1984) sees schools as hampering identity formation because they are unsafe. Schools are unsafe because they expose teens to violence and drug abuse. Elkind calls for school administrators to clamp down on the entrance of these adult problems into schools, by effecting greater control over youth. In contrast, Côté and Allahar (1994) argue that too much control over young people already exists in schools. These authors see young people as being kept under the watchful eyes of educational bureaucracies for longer periods of time. Their extended schooling conditions them into accepting beliefs that support the development of a servile work force (e.g., success and failure are purely a function of individual effort). Because Côté and Allahar differ from Elkind with respect to the nature of the problems that they see the school and media as posing for youth, the two theories cannot be compared with respect to these points.

However, the two theories can be contrasted with respect to their views on how identity comes to be a concern for adolescents. Côté and Allahar (1994) contend that social-structural factors engender a need for identity in young people. As mentioned previously, they argue that adolescents' lengthy experiences in schools and the service industry causes

them to hunger for an identity. In contrast, Elkind (1984) contends that the development of thought processes underlies the task of identity formation. He argues that adolescents become concerned with identity when they acquire formal operations. Formal operations refers to the kind of thought process that Piaget saw as developing in adolescence. Formal thought develops as a consequence of maturational brain changes that are associated with puberty. Individuals capable of formal thought are characterized by their ability to weigh abstract theories and think reflexively. Elkind agrees with Piaget's notion that the transition from being a concrete thinker to a formal one is what prompts concern with establishing identity. An inability to think abstractly would preempt any consideration of political or religious values.

The political economy view also diverges from Elkind's (1984) views with respect to how it conceptualizes the process by which adolescents form their traits and values. Elkind sees the values and attributes that characterize adolescents as being the product of their new formal modes of thought. For example, Elkind would interpret young people's seeming self-preoccupation as adolescent egocentrism. Egocentrism is presumed to be an innate trait that develops as a consequence of the development of formal thought[5]. Elkind would likely interpret the young person's self-preoccupation as being a manifestation of two forms of adolescent egocentrism: the personal fable and the imaginary audience. The personal fable refers to the adolescent's conviction that his or her beliefs, ideals and feelings are unique and incomprehensible to others. The imaginary audience refers to the experience in which adolescents see themselves as the focus of an audience of their peers. This audience is one which they construct and react to, in their minds. In contrast, Côté and Allahar (1994) see adolescents' self-preoccupation as reflecting their indoctrination into acceptance of such values as individualism and self-gratification. For example, Côté and Allahar see computer games, along with the sports and entertainment industries, as encouraging a "feel good"(p.136) existence of immediate self-gratification. This is done to promote the intellectual passivity and social apathy which complement dominant interests.

Moreover, Côté and Allahar (1994) connect adolescents' fad behavior to the belief that identity can be bought. However, Elkind (1984)argues that teenagers' preoccupation with designer labels reflects their concern with impressing an imaginary audience. Elkind argues that pubertal changes cause young people to become concerned with their appearance. If in the process of developing formal thought, adolescents are unable to differentiate between what others are thinking about and their own preoccupations, they must assume that everyone is as obsessed about their appearance as they are. This would account for why adolescents appear to be more sensitive to media messages about how they should look, than any other age group. Thus Elkind sees the media as catering to the needs

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[5] The transition from childhood thinking (concrete thought) to formal thinking is characterized by the ability to conceptualize the thought processes of others and differentiate between one's own thoughts and those of others. However, it is not characterized by the ability to differentiate between the objects that the thoughts of others are directed towards and the objects that are the focus of one's own concern. Thus egocentrism develops because adolescents surmise that they become the objects of the thoughts of others as though all others were personally concerned with them (Muuss, 1988).

of adolescents, in addition to manipulating them. However, Côté and Allahar see the media as having an exclusively manipulative effect on youth. They see the insecurities of youth that Elkind is referring to as having been created by the media. For example, young women's preoccupation with appearance is held to be a product of teen magazines. These magazines bombard girls with the message that good looks and popularity are goals to strive for.

Commentary

Elkind's (1984) view of how identity becomes a concern for adolescents overcomes a deficiency in the political economy perspective. The political economy perspective suggests that identity concerns are motivated by adolescents' marginalization from adult society. However, Côté and Allahar (1994) do not specify how long the period of seperation must be before the need for identity is produced. Given that children in the upper elementary grades could also be seen as having experienced a long period of separation, it is not clear why identity formation is the specific task of adolescence. In contrast, Elkind's belief that the development of formal thought underlies identity concerns provides a sufficiently specific rationale for why identity formation does not occur before adolescence. Formal thought cannot occur in childhood because maturational brain changes that are associated with puberty are a prerequisite for its development.

However, Elkind's (1984) view is called into question by empirical evidence. Kuhn's (1979) review of the relevant literature suggests that formal operations may never be attained by a significant proportion of the adolescent population. However, Kuhn's conclusion must be looked upon with some caution as the task of comparing findings on formal thought has been plagued by the lack of standardized instruments to measure it. (Muuss, 1988). As well, empirical evidence shows a decline in the personal fable and imaginary audience as one moves into late adolescence. This finding cast doubt on Elkind's explanations of the self-preoccupation and fad behavior of such youth.

Both Elkind's (1984) theory and the political economy theory fail to take note of the potentially enriching effects that the media can have on youth. For example, exposure to the media can contribute to the development of a global consciousness and concern for others. Certain powerful media depictions, such as those of children harmed by napalm, have been shown to contribute greatly to the development of social concern.This occurs despite the fact that the media has encouraged desensitization to social ills (Lifton, 1993). Moreover, not all youth will receive media messages in the way they were intended. Rather, youth respond to the same media in varied ways as a result of their different life experiences, values and needs (Fornas & Bolin, 1995). This heterogeneity in young people's responses may also be a reflection of cognitive processes, as explained in the next section. By failing to take account of these varied effects, both sets of authors contribute to a "media panic"(Boethius, 1995) whose case is overstated.

Piaget versus the Political Economy View

Piaget (1958) held that the individual passes through four stages of cognitive development. He called the fourth stage, the formal operations stage. As mentioned

previously, Piaget supposed that this stage occurs during adolescence. He theorized that movement from one stage to the next involves qualitative changes in the individual's cognitive structure. These changes were held to be dependent on both the nervous system and the environment. Piaget maintained that maturational changes in the nervous system "determine the totality of possibilities and impossibilities" (p.337) with respect to thought, at any given stage. However, a "particular social environment remains indispensable for the realization of these possibilities" (p.337). Biological changes form the backdrop upon which assimilation and accommodation work. These processes take in environmental experiences in such a way that the cognitive structure expands. Assimilation refers to structuring the new experience or event to fit the individual's present cognitive organization. Accommodation refers to the change in the structure that occurs as a result of utilizing and incorporating the new experiences just assimilated.

Points of Convergence

The only point of convergence between Piaget's (1958) theory and the political economy view is that both theories acknowledge a role for social factors in identity development. Piaget does this by positing a role for them in the expansion of cognitive structure.

Points of Divergence

Piaget's (1958) theory diverges greatly from the political economy view in regards to how identity development becomes a concern for adolescents. As mentioned previously, Piaget argued that becoming a formal thinker is what enables one to become concerned with identity during adolescence. He believed that the social circumstances which surround the individual during the adolescent years are what cause formal thought to be expressed in concerns about identity. Because the development of formal thought coincides with the age in which individuals begin to assume adult roles, formal thought typically expresses itself in 1) thoughts about the future, 2) ideas of changing society, and 3) the construction of systems of theories. However, as mentioned previously, Côté and Allahar (1994) reject the idea that qualitative differences between children and adolescents form a necessary basis for identity concerns. Rather these authors see adolescents' need for identity as proceeding solely from the fact of their marginalization.

As well, while Côté and Allahar (1994) see the process of identity formation as largely socially determined, Piaget (1958) sees the role of the social environment as being limited to retarding or accelerating the development of thought. Although the different modes of thought form an invariant sequence, the realization of thought possibilities can be retarded or accelerated as a function of cultural conditions. Piaget acknowledges that the striking convergence between his subjects' responses and what is taught to them in schools could cause one to question whether the manifestations of formal thought are simply imposed on youth, as a result of schooling. However, he maintains that "for the social milieu to influence individual brains they must be in a state of readiness [i.e., biological] to assimilate its contributions"(p.339). The processes of assimilation and accommodation imply that the individual selectively incorporates new experiences into his or her intellectual organization,

based on the current readiness of his or her cognitive structure. Consequently, the individual is "not ... a tabula rasa on which social constraint imprints ready-made knowledge"(p.338). In contrast, Côté and Allahar see youth as highly susceptible to the imprinting of ready-made knowledge from schools and the media.

As well, the same comments that were made earlier in this chapter concerning Elkind's (1984) views on adolescent self-preoccupation and fad behavior can be extended to Piaget. This is because Elkind drew upon Piaget's (1958) concept of adolescent egocentrism. However, Piaget's thoughts on the decentering of egocentrism may be more applicable to the late adolescents that this thesis is concerned with. While Côté and Allahar (1994) attribute adolescents' disillusionment to the incongruity that exists between their experiences and the societal messages they receive, Piaget sees adolescents' loss of idealism as following from the incongruity that occurs between their adoption of adult roles and their egocentric thought. The act of assuming career or professional jobs leads their thinking away from the egocentric thought, which causes them to see themselves as idealistic reformers. The adolescent who fantasizes about becoming a famous actor or writer relinquishes his or her "immoderate ambitiousness" (p.344) when confronted with the knowledge of what he or she is realistically able to achieve in the workplace.

Commentary

As mentioned previously, Piaget's (1958) rationale for why identity becomes a concern in adolescence is called into question by findings which suggest that formal operations may never be attained by a significant proportion of the adolescent population (Kuhn, 1979). Moreover, empirical findings also call into question the very existence of an underlying formal cognitive structure. Bart (cited in Muuss, 1988) found low correlations between three tests, which tapped into different tasks thought to be characteristic of the formal stage. Since performance on these tasks would correlate or change synchronously, if the changes were the result of changes in the cognitive structure, one may conclude that there is not very convincing evidence for a formal structure. Finally, the assumption that cognitive development is dependent on maturational changes is called into question by the fact that children could perform tasks related to different stages in sequences that differed from those set out by the stages (Bandura,1964).

However, as mentioned previously, Piaget's theory provides a more sufficient rationale for why adolescence, rather than any other period of life, is the time of identity. As well, Piaget's (1958) belief in assimilation and accommodation, as the mechanisms which allow for social messages to be selectively received, allows for a more sufficient view of human agency. These processes can account for the role of personal history and individual choice in shaping what adolescents respond to. The heterogeneity that exists among youth with respect to the degree to which social messages are internalized is also better explained by the concepts of assimilation and accommodation. For Côté and Allahar's (1994) reliance on ego strength, as the mechanism which allows for agency. implies that nearly all youth are highly susceptible to messages from the media and education system. This is because ego strength is believed to decline as a function of inadequate social support for identity.

Côté and Allahar (1994) also appear to minimize the role of individual choice in identity formation on account of the political implications that an ideology of choice and freedom has for youth. If they had accorded youth greater agency, they could not have waged as strong an argument against the institutions which they believe have the most oppressive influence on youth identity. These authors may have also felt that they could not credit youth with greater freedom and at the same time criticize the depiction of adolescence as a carefree time of unlimited opportunities. Côté and Allahar see this kind of ideology as dangerous because it keeps young people from revolting against their oppressive circumstances.

Kohlberg versus the Political Economy View

Kohlberg (1984) posits six stages of moral development that are grouped into three moral levels. Although not one moral stage is especially connected with adolescence, Kohlberg found that the moral reasoning of stages three through five typically develop during this period. It is believed that many adults also operate at this level[6]. The conventional level contains stages three and four: the interpersonal concordance orientation and orientation towards authority, law and duty. These stages are characterized by a concern with maintaining, supporting and justifying the existing social order. The post-conventional level contains stages five and six: the social contract orientation and universal, ethical principles orientation. These stages are characterized by a concern with such "fundamental" principles as individual rights and human dignity.

Points of Convergence

Like Piaget's (1958) theory, the only point on which Kohlberg's (1984) theory converges with the political economy view is that it acknowledges the role of social factors in moral development. By positing that moral development depends on cognitive development, that is, the sequence of moral stages parallels the sequence of Piaget's cognitive stages, Kohlberg acknowledges that environmental experiences play some role in the acquisition of values.

Points of Divergence

Kohlberg (1984) argues that these stages imply that the fundamental structure of morality is a justice structure. The moral orientations that are found at each of them (eg., sustaining law and order, maximizing the welfare of the group) may all be seen as having to do with justice. In contrast, Côté and Allahar (1994) would suggest that there is no fundamental moral structure. Rather, the authors contend that social learning is the primary means by which adolescents derive their values. While adolescents' conformity to the norms of democracy and individual rights is seen by Kohlberg as reflecting their attainment of a universal stage, Côté and Allahar see these values as reflecting the individualistic ethos that is taught through the Western mass media and schools.

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[6] In fact, most adults never attain the postconventional level of moral reasoning.

Moreover, unlike the political economy view, but like Piaget (1958), Kohlberg (1984) sees the influence of social factors as limited to accelerating or retarding moral development. Côté and Allahar (1994) would see the lack of opportunities adolescents have to assume productive roles as making them vulnerable to having their values determined by the media. However, Kohlberg would argue that being deprived of opportunities to assume meaningful roles could only decelerate the individual's invariant progression through the aforementioned stages.

Commentary

The striking convergence between adolescents' conventional values and those espoused in primary social institutions cast some suspicion on the idea that values are acquired through fundamental stages. Although Kohlberg (1984) cites empirical evidence in support of his stages, only some of this evidence is compelling. Rest and Turiel (cited in Kohlberg, 1984) found that individuals can only comprehend the moral stage that is one level higher than the one which they presently occupy. This finding lends credence to the view of moral development as proceeding though an invariant sequence of stages. However, the cross-cultural data which Kohlberg cites is more questionable. Kohlberg's own observance of the apparent moral regression of the Atayal boys of Malaysia casts doubt on the assumption of a universal, invariant sequence. Kohlberg interprets the regression in a way that fits with his theory. The boys regression was evidenced by a change in their beliefs about dreams. Kohlberg suggests that this change occured because their confrontion with adult magical beliefs caused them to become uncertain of other naturally developing physical phenomenon[7]. However, the fact that the boys lost some of their cognitive ability at the same time that they were observed to morally regress should indicate regression in the moral / cognitive structure. Moreover, Kohlberg concedes that longitudinal data is still needed to conclusively establish the universality and invariance of the stages.

Gilligan versus the Political Economy View

Points of Convergence

Carol Gilligan's (1982) theory of women's moral development converges with the political economy view on two points. Both theories agree on what values and traits seem to be characteristic of young women. These values and traits include a concern for interpersonal relations, limited use of rational processes (such as those used in math), and disinterest in competition and achievement. Both theories also agree that social factors are largely responsible for the development of these values and traits.

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[7] Kohlberg argues that such regression occurs only when the normal course of social experience is interrupted and special forms of experience, like jail, affect the individual. One could see the current prolongation of adolescence as an example of such an experience. This could account for why people regress or fail to reach postconventional morality. Adolescents may remain at conventional morality because prolonged schooling facilitates the development of false consciousness.

Points of Divergence

Gilligan (1982) seems to attribute the values and traits of young women to early socialization experiences. However, Côté and Allahar (1994) view them as products of the indoctrinating effect of media and schools. Gilligan maintains that the above values and traits are symptoms of a different moral orientation in women. This moral orientation is believed to have its origins in sex differences with respect to early experiences of relationship with one's mother. It is also related to sex differences in early play experiences. Women tend to base their moral decision-making on considerations of care and responsibility to others, rather than justice principles. This occurs because such experiences as not having to separate from one's mother to form gender identity has caused women to be more "embedded" (p.8) in personal relationships than men. Accordingly, Gilligan does not see women's lesser use of rational processes as a deficiency. Rather she attributes this to their tendency to conceptualize moral problems in terms of an awareness that "the connection between people gives rise to a recognition of responsibility for one another"(p.38). In contrast, Côté and Allahar would argue that young women's lesser use of rational processes reflects the differential attention and invitation to exercise these processes that they receive in math and science classes. Côté and Allahar observe that adolescent girls continue to be streamed into courses that do not require the use of rational processes. They also contend that teachers' tend to ask male students more challenging questions. These teachers are also seen to take the time to help boys think through principles, as opposed to simply giving them the right answers, as they do in the case of girls. The authors argue that dominant economic interests are served by denying women the same help as men in developing their capacity for logical thinking. This denial of education handicaps women when it comes to gaining admission to more profitable science and engineering occupations.

Gilligan (1982) attributes young women's movement away from situations of competition and achievement to their "heightened perception ... of the great emotional costs at which success acheived through competition is often gained"(p.15). However, Côté and Allahar (1994) hypothesize that the decline in young women's school and career aspirations is a reflection of the media's focus on appearance and popularity. These authors observe that only three percent of the advertisements in young women's magazines are education and career-oriented. The rest of the ads and the vast majority of article content is oriented towards the enhancement of appearance and popularity.

Moreover, Gilligan (1982) sees young women's concern with interpersonal relations as stemming from the adolescent girl's achievement of the second level of female moral development. This level is characterized by a sense of responsibility for others and the capacity for self-sacrifice. Adolescent girls move from the first level of moral development in childhood, which is governed by egocentric selfishness, to the second level, in which goodness is identified with meeting the needs of others. This transition occurs because adolescent girls come to realize that asserting oneself implies danger. The danger is that self-assertion could lead to criticism and abandonment by others. However, Côté and Allahar (1994) suggest that these concerns of young women are tied to the media's promotion of traditional femininity. This promotion serves dominant interests by encouraging women to sacrifice their self-interest to concern for others.

Commentary

In contrast to Côté and Allahar (1994), Gilligan (1982) (and Elkind's [1984]) theory) acknowledge that the media may cater to pre-existing concerns in youth. However, as mentioned previously, Elkind's argument that the media caters to their egocentric insecurities is weakened by findings which question the prevalence of formal thought. Gilligan can argue more convincingly that the media caters to the traits and values which characterize women's innate orientation. This is because Gilligan points to socialization experiences, rather than differences in thought process, as being behind their pre-existing traits. However, one may question whether the socialization experiences that she refers to are still relevant for today's youth. The greater prevalence of single-parent families raises questions about whether gender identity is still attained through individuation and relationship with mothers.

Gilligan's (1982) theory can also be criticized for failing to specify why these socialization experiences have more influence on women than their present social reality. Her suggestion that women might not want to achieve positions of power, simply because of their "other-orientedness", is difficult to reconcile with the fact that such choices keep them in subordinate positions relative to men. The amount of influence that Gilligan assigns to early socialization is also called into question by the fact that women confront structural factors that deny them the opportunity to use rational processes. When a girl is not given the same opportunity to develop her rational thinking, it is hard to accept that she fails to use such processes, simply because she chooses to use others. Thus Gilligan appears to pay insufficient attention to the role of macro social factors in the lives of women.

Conversely, Côté and Allahar's (1994) theory can be criticized for the insufficient attention that they give to micro social factors such as family experiences or ethnic background. Côté and Allahar acknowledge that the impact of the media and schools is worse for female adolescents and ethnic minority youth. For example, the authors note that females are more exploited by the promotion of body images that can only be acheived through obsessive dieting. However, Côté and Allahar fail to acknowledge how these factors may color young people's subjective experience of their marginalization as youth. Although ethnic minority youth are subject to the same age-related oppression that is experienced by all youth in advanced industrial societies, cultural differences could lead them to hold different perspectives on this circumstance.

Bandura versus the Political Economy View

Points of Convergence

Both Bandura (1964) and Côté and Allahar (1994) challenge the notion of qualitative differences between children, adolescents and adults. As such, they both diverge from the stage theories of writers such as Piaget (1958) and Kohlberg (1984). As previously noted, these stage theories maintain that qualitative differences are responsible for the values and behaviors of youth. Bandura sees these values and behaviors as being the product of young people's observance of models (e.g., parents). Young people learn their values and

behaviors from watching models and receiving reinforcements for the acquisition of what was modelled. Côté and Allahar support Bandura's idea that learning takes place through the observance of models. Bandura maintains that such things as television and music act as "symbolic" (p.49) models which teens imitate. For example, Bandura cites research which found that exposure to media resulted in the adoption of sex-linked vocational roles and passive-dependency traits in girls. Bandura's belief that reinforcement plays a role in the shaping of adolescents' values and behaviors also fit with the political economy view. He suggests that adolescents may receive vicarious reinforcement by watching media personalities obtain reinforcement for the behaviors they model. Adolescents may also receive vicarious reinforcement simply by inferring that positive consequences proceed from the behavior of these celebrities. This idea is consistent with Côté and Allahar's belief that the rags to riches stories about sports heroes fuels adolescents' identification with them.

Moreover, as mentioned previously, Côté and Allahar (1994) suggest that young people are especially susceptible to media images because their capacity for agency has been diminished by a lack of opportunities. This idea is consistent with Bandura's (1964) observation that individuals who are insufficiently rewarded are more apt to model the behavior of those who control resources.

Points of Divergence

Although both theories agree that social factors are responsible for the values and behaviors of young people, Bandura (1969) sees adolescent development as a generally conflict-free process. Contrary to the commonly held "storm and stress" view of adolescence, young people pass through these years without much confusion or frustration. In the absence of rare, abrupt alterations in social-training or other relevant biological or environmental variables, social learning theory predicts that identity development is simply a continuation of the training for traits that began when children are very young. For example, Bandura found that teenage boys were fairly independent from their parents by their mid-teen years because they had received continual training for this trait, since their early childhood. In contrast, Côté and Allahar (1994) maintain that it is precisely the prolonged continuity of childhood training that today's adolescents are subject to that is responsible for their feelings of frustration. For, as mentioned previously, Côté and Allahar see the extended periods that youth now spend in schools as contributing to feelings of alienation.

While Bandura (1969) sees adolescents' fad behavior as connected to socio-economic factors, he does so in a different way than Côté and Allahar (1994) do. Bandura argues that teens cannot be differentiated from adults on the criteria of their involvement with fads. He suggests that adults demonstrate a lot of fad behavior that is not usually labeled as such. For example, adult women's hem lines change from year to year in accordance with the changes in fashion. As well, Bandura notes that "if preadolescent kids display less fad behavior than do adolescents, this difference may be due primarily to the fact that young kids do not possess the economic resources with which to purchase distinctive apparel, the latest phonograph records, and discriminative ornaments..."(p.191). Thus, in contrast to Côté and Allahar, Bandura does not see adolescents' involvement with fads as being connected to identity formation.

Bandura (1964) would agree with Côté and Allahar's (1994) view that the mass media indoctrinates young people into particular ideas about gender. However, he also notes that the potency of gender models may be a function of the extent to which the behavior in question is already sex-typed. In doing so, Bandura, shares Elkind (1984) and Gilligan's (1982) acknowledgement of the role that the media can play in catering to the pre-existing interests of youth.

Commentary

The vastly different observations about young people expressed by the two sets of authors are most likely a function of the times in which each theory was produced. The middle class teenage boys in Bandura's (1964) research lived in the 1960's . The fact that the labor market could, at this time, use the involvement of teenagers provided them with the opportunity to be fairly independent. In contrast, today's teens are actively kept out of the workforce. Thus Bandura's observance of adolescence as a generally conflict-free period may not be applicable to today's youth. These teens lack the continual training for economically advantageous traits that were enjoyed by their 1960's counterparts.

Bandura's (1964) recognition of adult fads challenges the idea that fads are necessary predictors of identity struggles. Côté and Allahar (1994) could argue that fads are symptomatic of identity struggles because young people are distinguished from older adults in their more frequent purchases of fashion and music. However, one could still question what makes those products any more identity-conferring than the houses and cars that older adults can buy. The utilitarian function of houses and cars does not preempt their use as symbols of taste and status.

Moreover, the interpretation of youth fads as symptomatic of identity confusion overlooks the different meanings that these products can carry from young person to young person. Some youth collect the compact discs of a particular band because the band symbolizes something that they would like to be associated with. From this perspective, musical fads could function as a predictor of identity problems, if the young person is seen to be oscillating between different musical styles. Meanwhile, others may purchase the same music simply because they identify with its lyrical content. From this perspective, the purchase of music is an expression of clear self-knowledge, Thus this scenario suggests that adolescents' involvement with fads cannot always be interpreted as a sign of identity problems.

Sebald versus the Political Economy View

Points of Convergence

Hans Sebald's (1992) theory has much in common with the political economy view. Like Côté and Allahar (1994), Sebald maintains that the stability of adolescent identity depends upon the stability and consistency of the social environment. Both theories suggest that identity development is impaired by the culture's inability to indicate feasible ways of acheiving the values it encourages. For example, Côté and Allahar observe that

economically-deprived adolescents must commit crimes in order to possess such "identity" products as running shoes. Sebald suggests that the apathy among today's youth probably reflects their inability to attain cultural goals, like material success, in spite of intense striving. Moreover, both theories agree about the effects that the lack of support of institutions like schools have on identity development. Both sets of authors see the schools as providing a custodial function. Sebald notes that the increasing concern about dropouts is motivated less out of awe for the knowledge received in schools, than out of the worry of not knowing what else to do with youth, given their exclusion from the workforce. He also sees schools as failing to equip young people with the kind of preparation needed to assume jobs. Secondary school curriculums are more oriented towards providing "general life preparation" than academic or vocational training.

Sebald's (1992) views on mass media also appear to converge with those expressed by Côté and Allahar (1994). Sebald maintains that merchants and market researchers use advertising to manipulate the tastes and styles of the young. He also notes that adolescents come to exhibit incompatible behavior forms as a result of the diversity of media that they are exposed to. The experience of media diversity may be manifested in situational styles of problem solving. In this case, the young person is seen to behave like a different person in each situation. As well, Sebald concurs with Côté and Allahar's belief that value formation can proceed through the ubiquitous images and models presented in media. Sebald (1992) notes that "the question of 'who am I?' becomes tied to ephermal and superficial commercialism that guarantees the viewer a front seat in the social status circle, if he or she just uses the right deodorant" (p.220).

Both theories attribute young people's self-preoccupation and desire for immediate self-gratification to the influence of the environment. They see the culture as responsible for indoctrinating youth with into individualistic tenets that are responsible for their self-preoccupation. One such tenet is the idea that success and failure are completely a function of individual merit. As Sebald (1992) notes, "In a society that encourages all to strive and promises success to those who are capable, failure is seen as evidence of personal inadequacy" (p.93).

Points of Divergence

Both theories maintain that identity development is hampered by the failure of the social environment to provide youth with a sense of purpose. However, Côté and Allahar (1994) suggest that identity problems are about being deprived of purpose primarily through lack of opportunities and economic exploitation. Sebald (1992), on the other hand, feels that the failure of the culture to provide a "compelling ideation"(p.33) is the foreground issue in identity problems . Each theory acknowledges the value of the others' perspective, but assigns it a secondary role to the perspective which they champion.

What Sebald (1992) means by the lack of a compelling cultural ideation is the fact that advanced industrial societies fail to present their members with an unambiguous, coherent set of cultural values. For example, adolescents are given conflicting messages about whether they should act more like children or adults. The lack of a compelling cultural

ideation also refers to the fact that those values which are strongly suggested by the culture do not provide members with the clear direction needed to form viable identities. Western culture does suggest a number of strong values, such as individualism and democracy. However, because these values place the burden of deciding upon a life meaning in the hands of individuals, adolescents in Western societies must face more struggles in forming their identities relative to other youth.

Sebald (1992) suggests that the lack of a compelling cultural ideation is a more significant source of young people's meaninglessness than the fact that they are unable to secure productive economic roles. He argues that it is because of the loss of basic cultural identity that people had to resort to tying their sense of who they are with what they do. Côté and Allahar (1994), on the other hand, suggest that it is not dependency on economic position for identity that is a problem. Rather they see the types of jobs that young people are relegated to as the chief problem for youth identity. It is their exclusion from anything but exploitive service positions that lies behind their lack of purpose. Côté and Allahar see adolescents' indoctrination into acceptance of values like individualism to be problematic, for different reasons than Sebald does. In their view, the problem with such values lies in their incongruence with the impoverished reality of youth. The belief that success and failure are up to the individual, for example, results in frustration for the young person who is forced to work in the service industry despite years of schooling.

The different focus taken by the two theories is clearly illustrated by the different ways in which they conceptualize young people's experience with gender roles. Côté and Allahar (1994) argue that young people experience a "flight" (p.86) into traditional gender roles, as a consequence of the ways that the media and schools manipulate them. However, Sebald (1992) sees adolescents as coping with vague sex role concepts that are a product of 1) parents being unable to convey role definitions that fit with the technological and social environment of their children and 2) the culture's emphasis on personal freedom to define one's self. In other words, Côté and Allahar view youth as being indoctrinated into highly specific beliefs about femininity and masculinity, which promote frustration because these ideals are hard to approximate in reality. On the other hand, Sebald sees youth as being frustrated because the culture fails to provide clearcut messages about to be a man or woman[8]

Although both theories see youth as experiencing isolation in their workworld experiences, they do so in different ways. Sebald (1992) sees young people as suffering from isolation because they enter more specialized occupations than youth of the past. Young people's identity formation is impaired by their lack of exposure to a broad cross-section of adults. In contrast, Côté and Allahar (1994) see youth as suffering from isolation, on account of their ghettoization in low-paying, deskilled jobs.

Finally, although Sebald (1992) agrees with Côté and Allahar's (1994) views on the failure of schools to prepare students for jobs, he appears to agree more with Erikson (1968)

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[8] However Sebald notes that there appears to be a resurgence of traditional masculinity and femininity in the culture.

and Marcia (1966), on the idea that adolescents lack of commitment to careers follow from an inability to make choices. Sebald argues that teens find it difficult to decide on an occupation because they are confronted with moving from a school situation to specialized employment roles. He suggests that because adolescents were accustomed to participating in varied activities during school, they find it hard to settle on one occupation that will provide them with as much personal fulfillment.

Commentary

As mentioned previously, Côté and Allahar (1994) argue that young people would find sufficient meaning in their lives if given the opportunity to assume productive economic roles. In contrast, Sebald (1992) argues that the lack of a compelling cultural ideation for youth is the more significant contributor to identity problems. The lack of a compelling cultural ideation is deemed to be more significant because the effects of adolescents' social-structural marginality is mitigated by their participation in work apprenticeships and part-time work. Sebald maintains that these activities allow youth to practice socially responsible behavior and gain a feeling of self-reliance. He also suggests that part-time work and apprenticeships facilitate the process of selecting and preparing for a final occupation. However, Sebald's argument is weakened by the fact that work apprenticeships are no longer readily available for most youth. Moreover, Sebald's perception of the benefits that can be derived from adolescents' part-time work fail to fit with the nature of the service jobs that constitute their part-time work opportunities. Côté and Allahar observe that the part-time work that is available for adolescents is far from facilitative of the process of preparing for a final occupation. They note that "these positions provide little opportunity for advancement or for exercising authority...tasks are often simple and repetitive (stocking shelves, cleaning, and carrying) and therefore require little training, special skill, or knowledge"(p.47).

Moreover, Sebald (1992) does not appear to assign much significance to the economic exploitation of youth, because, in contrast to Côté and Allahar (1994), Sebald does not see adolescents' purchases of identity products as a direct means of identity formation. Rather Sebald views adolescents' consumption of these products as indirectly facilitating identity development by creating a feeling of belonging to a youth subculture[9]: Sebald argues that subcultures provide youth with the support to form identities, since subcultures are formed by young people who have decided upon alternative norms and values which fit together. These youth determined values act to compensate for the mainstream cultural vacuum. Seen in this light, adolescents' consumption of music and fashion may help them form something other than superficial identities. For it is the role that consumption plays in creating a sense of belonging with peers and not the effort to imitate media images that Sebald sees as being relevant to identity formation. Côté and Allahar's failure to acknowledge the indirect role that consumption can have on identity formation is a weakness of their perspective. Unlike Sebald's theory, their analysis fails to account for how

[9] Sebald is referring to a general or popular youth subculture as opposed to more narrow subculture groups (e.g., skinheads, punks)

"youth [can be] both typically confused adolescents in the adult world and self-assured and status-conscious members of their peer groups"(p.243).

However, Sebald's (1992) belief in the distinctiveness of the values of the youth subculture is not very convincing. The anti-intellectualism, and concern with popularity and status that Sebald sees as constituting the alternative values of the subculture do not appear to be all that different from mainstream values. Sebald's argument about identity proceeding from group identification, by way of product consumption, may pertain more to youth in narrow subcultural groups. For example, "grunge" adolescents consume second hand clothes to reflect their environmentalist beliefs.

Moreover, it could be argued that if consumerism is vital to subcultural involvement then the norms and values of the youth subculture cannot be all that different from the those encouraged by agents of mainstream culture (e.g., mass media). Thus although youth may actually gain a stronger sense of identity by identifying with a group, the values of materialism and consumerism that enable this identification nevertheless support the development of a superficial and tenuous identity. If a member of a subculture can be cast aside for not keeping up with the latest fad, then how self-assured could young people become through their group identification?

Sebald (1992) also appears to assign less significance to the role of economics because he sees today's youth as being highly involved in a search for alternative lifestyles. Their involvement in cults and the new age movement suggest that they are in need of the sense of meaning that comes specifically from being exposed to less ambiguous values. However, the examples that Sebald gives of young people turning to cults seem outdated. For example, he speaks of the popularity of the "moonies" despite their being a 1970's phenomenon. Moreover, the new age movement is more often associated with baby boomers than the current generation of adolescents.

Sebald (1992) also probably minimized the role of economics on account of the alienation exhibited by affluent youth. Sebald theorizes that because these youth do not have to be concerned about jobs, their alienation may be related to having the time to engage in abstract activities, such as "philosophizing about possible reasons why they are so bored" (p.301). He also suggests that their alienation could be related to the fact that they are in a position of being able to act on their observance of others' suffering. Affluent youth are in a position to critique the oppressive social system, from which they are unaffected. That affluent youth experience alienation suggests that economic marginalization cannot sufficiently account for adolescents' sense of meaninglessness.

The different views of each theory on the isolation of young people in the workplace highlight Sebald's (1992) failure to make note of all the ways that young people are subject to age-related oppression. Sebald concedes that adolescents are affected more strongly than adults by the lack of a compelling cultural ideation. He attributes this to the fact that they have not secured positions in the workforce. However, his analysis ignores some of the other ways in which young people are especially disadvantaged relative to other age groups, as a result of occupational restructuring. This criticism has serious implications for youth. By

concentrating on the lack of a cultural identity for youth and ignoring their age-related oppression, Sebald's theory could be seen as implying that identity confusion is functional. A coherent value system would result in foreclosed identities that would be incongruent with life in a Western democracy.

It is possible that there may be an interactive relationship between the different sources of confusion that each theory focuses on. For example, young people may be motivated to embrace the images of femininity and masculinity put forth in media to put an end to their search for clarity about gender roles. In other words, it may be that youth are faced with vague and nonspecific cultural blueprints regarding gender, which the media, among other institutions, capitalize on by selling them highly specific cultural ideologies that address the young person's need for meaning.

Finally, Sebald's (1992) observation about young people being accustomed to participating in a broad range of activities is in line with previously mentioned ideas about personal fulfillment informing their lack of career commitment. The struggle to find a career that can fulfill all of the different parts that one has become accustomed to having fulfilled in school fits with the idea of struggling to make career decisions, with the knowledge that one may not secure employment in any field.

From Found Self to Made Self

The differences between the political economy perspective and most of the psychological theories reviewed here can be attributed to different philosophical notions of the nature of the self. That is, theories advanced by Piaget (1958), Kohlberg (1984), Gilligan (1982) and Erikson (1968), are firmly rooted in the dominant, modernist framework of the self. On the other hand, Côté and Allahar (1994) and Sebald (1992) venture into a more social contructionist view of the person. The modernist framework is that of an authentic and rational self (Cushman, 1991). It is an autonomous, fully integrated and moral entity that is defined by its separateness and distinctiveness from other people (Sampson, 1985). Sampson notes that this self ideal is the structure of personal identity that is believed to be required so that order and coherence, rather than chaos, will characterize the individual's life. Order and coherence are acheived by means of seeking control and mastery over the world.[10] These traits were (and still are) held by many to reflect universal truths about human nature. They are expressed in the signature features of developmental theories. The idea of an authentic and unique self is reflected in the idea of a moratorium that facilitates finding one's self through introspection and exploration. The idea of an active and rational self is in line with the focus on how changes in the brain can result in a capacity for critical thought. The idea of a self that is basically good in nature underlies the view that propensities for rational and just behavior lie within every individual.

Côté and Allahar's (1994) support of some of Erikson's (1968) concepts like the moratorium make it somewhat consistent with a modernist view of the self. However, as mentioned above, these writers also demonstrate affinities with a more socially constructed

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[10] The modernist conception of the person is elaborated in the next chapter.

view of the self. The social constructionist argument assumes that "humans do not have a basic, fundamental pure human nature that is transhistorical and transcultural. Humans are incomplete and therefore unable to function adequately, unless embedded in a specific cultural matrix" (Cushman, 1990, p.601). Social constructionist theorists of the self maintain that the predominant configuration of the self in any era is one that has been configured in order to conform to the requirements of a particular era (Cushman, 1991). From this perspective, the authentic, rational self described above was developed to fit with the character of modern Western society. For example, Foucault (cited in Cushman, 1990) observes that the changes undergone by the self are not developmental changes brought on by an inner logic. Rather he suggests that this self ideal was created to reinforce and reproduce the constellations of power within Western society. With the decline of traditional forms of authority such as the monarchy, the state had to develop internal ways of controlling the more mobile and less predictable subject, produced by industrialization and urbanization. Thus social constructionist theorists focus on how the self is a cultural artifact. They are, therefore, concerned with how other cultural artifacts shape the generalized reality orientation held by members of a given community (Cushman, 1990). Côté and Allahar's focus on how mass media messages pervade the consciousness of young people is thus a prime example of this perspective.

Within the political economy view and many social constructionist theories, the active, rational subject is replaced by a passively acheived product of the social environment. This new fluid and passive configuration of the self is believed to reflect the characteristics of the new social era that is emerging. This new mediated or consumer culture is elaborated in the next chapter. In line with the new view of the self is Côté and Allahar's (1994) focus on the social learning of personality and morality. Their view of development as continuous, rather than stage-dependent, is also consistent with the new self ideal.

It is true that the aforementioned features resemble Bandura's (1964) theory. However, in spite of Bandura's environmentalist views, his theory also belongs to a modernist framework. Bandura's theory is modernist because of its assumption that social learning is a universal, rational law governing human behavior. Côté and Allahar (1994) , on the other hand, view social learning as occuring within a framework that focuses on how the self is constructed for particular social purposes. That is, the underlying rationale for social learning is that social interests are served by it, as opposed to it being motivated by an essential feature of human beings.

This comparison of the political economy view and Bandura's theory highlights the central difference between modernist and social contructionist perspectives with respect to the self-environment interaction. In modernist theories, human beings are usually seen as being basically good (e.g., Kohlberg), or at least "blank slates" (e.g., Bandura). These good or neutral selves become tainted or enriched by their exposure to the environment. For example, one becomes identity confused on account of negative social conditions that either detract from the natural unfolding of a person's goodness, or create a dysfunctional character. However, with social constructionist theories, the self can be neither fundamentally good nor bad nor neutral. Rather, valuations of the self depend entirely on

whether or not the self ideal advances or thwarts one's own interests within the culture. For example, within the political economy view, the superficial and tenous identities of young people are negatively valued when viewed from the perspective of the interests of youth. This same self ideal may be viewed in a positive light by those who stand to gain from their exploitation. (I refer to Côté and Allahar's view of the self as fully socially constructed here for the purpose of illustrating the difference between social constructionist and modernist takes on the self. This is somewhat misleading as their retention of Eriksonian notions, like the ego, imply that there is some basic nature to the self. However, the basic capabilities of these structures, like agency, are being eroded by current social forces).

Côté and Allahar (1994) bring much needed attention to important social factors that are influencing the lives of young people at this historical moment. Although they draw on Erikson's (1968) theory, they go beyond fitting in pieces to a puzzle of youth identity that fit neatly with the pieces provided by traditional psychological theories. The social constructionist features of their theory push us to consider an alternate framework for identity. If we accept these conclusions, it may be correct to suggest a move away from the model of the modern "found" self to the more current configuration of the socially constructed or "made" self. In modernist theories, identity is an acheived condition of the mind. One finds this mental state primarily through the unfolding of inner potentialities, a process that is "helped along" by encounters with the social world. In social constructionist theories, one's identity is seen to be "made" by one's positioning with respect to different forms of social discourse. And as we shall see in forthcoming chapters, one's identity may also be made by individual persons through their reflexive use of symbolic forms, such as language. Although modernist theories also imply that the individual is involved in reflexive self-construction, the qualities of one's identity are believed to be actual entities that are waiting to be discovered. This contrasts with social constructionist theories, in which all attributes of the self have no independent or a priori existence, but are purely a product of the environment.

However, before one jumps into making the shift from the "found"to the "made" self, it should be remembered that the political economy theory is limited by its narrow views of the media, schooling, and in particular, human agency. It must also be remembered that in spite of its social constructionist features, the political economy theory does not depart from modernist ideals of struggling for a meaningful, coherent and autonomous identity - ideas that are still highly important to many young peoples's lived experience.

In the next chapter, I explore the value of making the shift from a found self to a made self further by introducing other social constructionist perspectives that do not maintain the assumptions that Côté and Allahar (1994) share with the psychologists. Their rejection of these key assumptions calls into question the intelligibility and merit of the very concept of identity.

Chapter Three **Postmodern Identities**

Who knows even if this "category" [of self], which all of us believe to be well founded, will always be recognized as such? It is formulated only for us, among us...With us the idea could disappear.

Marcel Mauss, Une Categorie de L'Esprit Humain

In this chapter, I explore further the possibility that our selves may be not be the solid, inner entities that we tend to think of them as. In particular, I discuss the two paths that theorists have taken in the aftermath of concluding that the self is an illusion. The more radical path is marked by a desire to kill the very concept of the self. The less radical path is marked by an exploration of the kind of experience of the self that can remain, in a world where modernist ideals are on the wane.

In the previous chapter, I refer to the authentic, rational self as being modernist. This self ideal is modernist because it reflects the characteristics of the modern age (also known as modernity). However, it should be noted that cultural artifacts that are characteristic of modernity have not typically been described as modern. This is because one of the defining characteristics of modern culture is that its features are assumed to be universal and transhistorical. These artifacts are more likely to be thought of as objects with fundamental natures. Thus, authenticity and rationality constitute the essential character of the human self. The term modern then is most often assigned by those who adhere to a social constructionist view of the self. These writers use the term modern to draw attention to the culture which they believe produced this self ideal. However, whether one believes that this self is fundamental or a social construct, it is certainly true that it bears a striking resemblance with features of the modern period. Thus, regardless of one's beliefs, it is useful to understand the culture of modernity, or modernism, as it is commonly called, in order to understand this self. Moreover, an understanding of modernism is crucial to understanding the postmodern views of the self that are reviewed in this chapter.

What is Modernism?

In this section, I do not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of modernism. Rather my purpose is to highlight some central themes which bear on the modernist conception of the person. It is also important for the reader to know that this account necessarily reflects my own reading of the subject. This is due to the lack of consensus that exists among analysts of modern culture. One particular point of controversy that readers need be made aware of, however, is that there is no agreement about whether modernism still persists. I raise this issue because I use the past tense in describing modernism. However, I ask that readers not see my use of the past tense as a statement of my position on the issue. Rather, the past tense is used here for the purpose of making the subsequent discussion of postmodernism more intelligible.

Modernity was a historical period that began around 1500 with the era of European exploration and colonization of the world (Lemert, 1997) The era of European colonization ultimately resulted in the defining structure of the modern world. This world structure is characterized by the idea of a center or core . Modernity was the time of an unrivalled imperial center or dominant core state. The United States has been the most recent example of a clear world power. The center or core image also reflects a universal world culture that was based on Western values. This metaphor is further suggestive of the unity that existed between the world and the symbols which represented it. For example, the words of a language were held to be mirrorlike reflections of an objective reality (Gergen, 1991) .

This core structure was reflected in modern culture. More specifically, it was reflected in three historical movements: the Enlightenment, neo-Enlightenment and Romantic era. The Enlightenment was the eighteenth century movement developed to advance the ideology that "reason is sufficient to human progress which, in turn, is considered the distinctive characteristic of the modern age" (Lemert, 1997, p.66). Reason that was put in service of seeking universal truths would result in the ability to exploit this knowledge for human gain.Knowledge of universal truths was believed possible because of the belief in an essential nature to things.Thus the quest for knowledge that resulted in progress proceeded through the use of reason in determining the true essence of things. And if reason was what allowed for the discernment of essences, then reason was also the mechanism for liberating humankind from the suspicion and ignorance of past ages (Gergen, 1991) The Enlightenment thus extended the promise of "economic progress, social equality, and freedom from want"(Lemert, p.4).

The Enlightenment themes of reason, progress, and essence were revisited in the Neo- Enlightenment era of the twentieth century. Darwin's thesis, however, caused empiricist philosophers in the early part of the century to add science to these themes. The answer that these thinkers proposed to the question of how human beings could ensure their survival was science, "with its cornucopia of technological by-products" (Gergen, 1991, p.29). A science that was based on rational methods, like systematic observation, should guide the search for universal truths. The successful use of the scientific method in the physical sciences prompted its application in the world of human affairs. The result was the development of a broad range of social sciences to "produce a mathematics of human behavior as precise as the mathematics of machines" (Russell, cited in Gergen, p 30). The aforementioned machine image was another contribution to the themes of modernism. Increased industrialization was reflected in the pervasive use of mechanical metaphors. The machine was honored because it could produce jobs, work for the benefit of everyone and generate enormous incomes for its owners. The computer is the most recent example of a machine metaphor (Barglow, 1994).

The Enlightenment notion of gaining control over entities parallels the colonization that characterized the modern world structure (Lemert, 1997) Similarly, the belief in universal truths found through the application of reason is consistent with the idea of a universal world system, based on Western values. These features of modernism are, in turn, reflected in the modernist conception of the person. If natural entities were held to have essential natures, it follows that there also must be a basic self within the person (Gergen,

1991).The fact that this basic character must include a capacity for rationality results in a view of an active self that is capable of moral decision-making. Moreover, as mentioned previously, the capacity for rationality also underlies the idea that human actions must largely result from environmental observation: "As rational creatures, we pay attention to the world and adjust our actions accordingly" (p.41). Finally, in line with the machine or computer metaphor is the view of a mechanical self. As psychologist Ulrich Neisser (cited in Gergen), points out, "the computer provided the much needed assurance that cognitive processes were real" (p.40).

The Romantic era of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries posed a challenge to the supremacy of reason. This historical movement is known for its emphasis on creative expression and subjective passion (Baumeister, 1985). The romantics held that creative expressions derived from the unique treasures buried within the self of the creator. While this idea reflects the modernist notion of an inner essence, it also adds the notions of psychological depth and mystery. Poets such as Wordsworth and Shelley suggested that there was a world to the self that lay beneath the veneer of conscious reason (Gergen, 1991). For many romantics, this layer of the self was said to be the soul. More secular romantics described it as a passionate, although potentially dangerous force in the individual. The latter view was also reflected in the Victorian interest in unconscious signals and, in particular, Freud's psychology. Freud held that an energy of desire lying beneath the reaches of consciousness constituted the major driving force behind human behavior. The supremacy of the unconscious structure which contained this energy contributed greatly to the modernist notion of a hidden self. The modernist conception of the person combines the abovementioned Romantic characteristics with the Enlightenment and Neo-Enlightenment emphasis on reason. Erikson's (1968) theory is a case in point. The assumption that one must find one's self conveys the notions of hidden depth and mystery. However, the site of desire, (the id), is replaced by the site of rationality, (the ego), as the most significant motivator of human behavior.

What is Postmodernism?

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of some of the central themes of postmodernism. As in the case of the preceding section on modernism, I limit my description here to those themes which bear on the postmodernist conception of the person. I must also offer the same kinds of cautions to the reader that prefaced the preceding section. Far less agreement exists about what constitutes postmodernism than surrounds what constitutes modernism (Bertens, 1995). There is also a fierce debate about whether we have actually moved into a postmodern period (or postmodernity). This debate, in turn, has raised questions about the existence and value of a postmodern culture. Postmodernism has been described as the culture that is "after, against, but still mixed up with modernity"(Lemert, 1997, p.27). Although I use the present tense in writing about it, I do so only for the sake of ease of description. However, regardless of one's beliefs about postmodernity, most commentators see postmodernism as referring to the culture which reflects changes in the world structure. For just as the world order of modernity parallels modern culture, changes in this order parallel cultural changes that are being identified as postmodern.

In addition to the difficulties described above, the task of describing postmodernism is further complicated by it being something which can only be defined by what it is not (Lemert, 1997). Postmodernism is the culture that is not modernism. As the preceding paragraph implies, postmodern culture does not refer to a distinctive, new culture which neatly followed the passage of modernism. Rather, it reflects the changes that are occuring to modernism.

Specifically, postmodernism describes the situation in which the modern world is seen to be breaking apart (Lemert, 1997) W.B.Yeats (cited in Jencks,1993) verse, "Things fall apart. The center cannot hold", reflects the changes that have occured to the structure of the modern world (p.294). The features of the modern world order that were discussed in the previous section have weakened or collapsed.The world colonial system began to collapse with the success of the Indian and Chinese decolonizing movements in the late 1940's and 1950's. The next three decades saw much of Asia, Africa and the Carribean break free from European political control. The defeat of the Americans in Vietnam and the similar defeat of the Soviets in Afganistan seemed to mark the end to a colonial system that had begun in the 1500's.

The world is also no longer characterized by one central power. Although the United States continues to have the strongest economy and military, its powers are now qualified.[12] The new arrangement is one in which a group of Western states plus Japan, "consulting guardedly with Russia and China" (Lemert, 1997, p.33) rule the world economy. And along with the collapse of this center, came strong opposition to the idea of a universal world culture that is based on Western values. The emergence of the feminist, gay and ethnic movements provides just one example of this (Barglow, 1994). Finally, there appears to be a growing lack of fit between the world and its symbols. For example, media portrayls of the world no longer seem to be motivated by the way the world really is. Rather, audiences are growing increaingly conscious that the news they watch on TV reflects the "various social, ethical, and political pressures that go into fashioning 'the factual world'" (Gergen, 1991, p.120).

The dissolution of the core or center that characterized the modern age is reflected in the postmodern view that there can be no universal truths or fundamental essences. With the absence of universal truths, there can only be local knowledges, that is, knowledge that is linked with a particular context. Rationality, and commitment to science, for example, are viewed as part of a "metanarrative" of progress (Lyotard, cited in Kvale, 1992, p.34) that Western culture tells to itself. These metanarrratives or forms of knowledge have a social basis and are supported by the culture in which they are produced. They allow members of a particular culture to feel that their pursuits are legitimate and gratifying. Postmodernists argue that beneath all the emancipatory ideals of modern culture lies a deeper motive to suppress the social differences which disrupt the modernist project (Lemert, 1997). The ideal of rationality, for example, functions to devalue other forms of knowledge such as intuition. This rationale behind metanarratives therefore reflects a particular kind of social contructionism. The incoherence that exists between the world and its symbols is consistent

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[12] The strength of the U.S. economy is limited by its vast economic and social debts. Moreover, as Lemert (1997) observes, "what can military sophistication do in a world where a chemically treated pile of manure is sufficient to destroy a federal buiding in Oklahoma City?" (p.33).

with the postmodern idea that societies use language and other media for particular purposes. More specifically, societies use language and other media to construct reality (Kvale, 1992) Exposure of the cultural contexts on which local narratives actually depend results in a discrediting of the global systems of modernity. And as Kvale points out, "with a delegitimation of the global systems of thought, there is no foundation to secure a universal and objective reality" (p.19). Postmodern culture has, in fact, been defined as the culture in which "reality isn't what it used to be" (p.19). As Lemert observes, "If what modern knowledge says about reality is no longer automatically true, then in this sense 'reality' itself is held in some doubt" (p.39) Put another way, reality is a modernist social construct.

In light of the preceding discussion, it may be more correct to suggest that postmodernism is concerned with the construction of realities. The postmodern concern with realities parallels the multiple views of the postmodern self. It is also reflected in the multiplicity and diversity which characterize these different takes on the postmodern person. These more specific themes, among others, will be elaborated in the following review of postmodern views of the self.

However, before beginning this review, I wish to draw the readers attention back to the theories of Côté and Allahar (1994) and Sebald (1992). The question of what makes these theories more social constructionist, as opposed to postmodern, sheds further light on what is meant by postmodernism. Moreover, by identifying what is and is not postmodern about these theories, the difference between how modernists and postmodernists treat the self-environment relationship is illuminated.

Clearing A Path (towards the postmodern experience)

Côté and Allahar's (1994) theory of youth identity undoubtedly reflects a doubtful attitude towards the reality suggested by modernism. Many of their social constructionist features resemble the views of the most influential postmodern theorists. Their belief in the highly pervasive influence of media on youth, for example, recalls Jean Baudrillard's (cited in Lemert, 1997) suggestion that we have entered into a period of hyperreality. Hyperreality describes the situation in which people have become so impacted by televisual media that they can no longer distinguish between simulations of reality and reality, itself. However, Côté and Allahar's views do not go as far as Baudrillard's, as they suggest that identity confusion proceeds from the small gap which occurs between the young person's lived experience and mediated experience.

Côté and Allahar's (1994) views also appear to be compatible with the way in which Jean-Francois Lyotard (cited in Lemert, 1997) expresses his doubts about the modern reality. Freedom of choice and personal responsibility can be read as components of a metanarrative of individuality, that is promoted by the media and schools. This metanarrative acts to discourage young people from recognizing how their actions complement dominant interests at the expense of their own.

Furthermore, the social constructionist features of Côté and Allahar's (1994) theory are also somewhat consistent with Foucault's (cited in Lemert, 1997) view of the deceptive

way in which power appears to operate in modernity. Foucault's belief that power is exercised through the apparently benign means of teaching knowledge is consistent with the political economy assumption that schools function to indoctrinate youth into forms of thinking which support dominant interests.

In sum, the similarities between the political economy view and postmodern theories boil down to the experience of not knowing whether the messages that one has grown up with still apply or ever did refer to some truth about the way the world operates. The idea that "reality isn't what it used to be" (Kvale, 1992, p.19) thus refers to such things as no longer being guaranteed security or rewards by simply working hard at legitimate enterprises. The modernist youth of Erikson's (1968) theory confronted the difficulty of making choices in a fairly predictable world. However, postmodernist youth must make choices without the benefit of any guarantees of what their actions might bring.

In spite of its postmodern features, Côté and Allahar's (1994) theory falls more in line with the more broad construct of social constructionism. The political economy view appears more compatible with social constructionism on account of their central assumption that a masterful, coherent identity can be secured through the attainment of a meaningful economic role. This assumption is social constructionist in that it posits social role as the basis for identity, as opposed to inner processes. However, the assumption fails to be postmodernist on account of the value it places on modernist ideals of mastery and coherence.

Moreover, in spite of the commonality it shares with Foucault's (cited in Lemert, 1997) theory, the political economy view also diverges from it in a way that reflects its modernist orientation. In Foucault's theory, it follows that if power works through the popular effects of knowledge, then its exercise does not proceed in a linear fashion from the more powerful to less powerful forces in a society. However, Côté and Allahar's (1994) analysis retains the notion of power as proceeding only from the top-down. It does this through its utilisation of the class-based political economy framework. If Côté and Allahar were to have incorporated Foucault's insight on this matter, they would have undermined their notion of youth as a subordinate class. The notion of youth as a subordinate class draws important attention to the ways in which youth as a category are disadvantaged in advanced industrial societies. However, it simultaneously functions to support the modernist project of suppressing important social differences among young people such as race.

Furthermore, Côté and Allahar's (1994) view of the self-environment relationship is still characterized by the modernist concept of alienation. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the modernist view of the self-environment interaction is that one's fundamental character can be either tainted or enriched by one's exposure to the environment. Negative social conditions can either detract from the unfolding of a person's basic goodness or create a dysfunctional character. From this perspective, the self stands apart from the environment. Côté and Allahar, on the other hand, see the self as being primarily socially constructed. Although they retain some conception of a basic self, its agency has been so eroded by social forces that what remains of the self appears almost entirely externally determined. Thus Côté and Allahar's theory paints the picture of a self that is increasingly merging with the

social world. However, this merger is apparently still far from complete. For in their agreement with Erikson's (1968) discussion of identity crises as being prompted by an insufficient social environment, they support the notion that the individual's relationship to the environment is still that of alienation. The concept of alienation assumes that the self is distinct from the environment. The alienated individual experiences feelings of powerlessness, meaninglessness and frustration as a result of being unable to find fulfillment in the range of options available in society (Baumeister, 1985). Alienation provides the individual with the options of being a rebel or victim with respect to society.

The social constructionist features of Sebald's (1992) theory also reflect key postmodern ideas. Sebald's focus on the lack of a coherent cultural system is clearly in line with the changes that have occured to the modern world structure. However, unlike Côté and Allahar (1994), Sebald reflects both modernist and postmodernist evaluations of the type of person that develops from the experience of today's culture. As mentioned previously, both sets of theorists converge with respect to their negative evaluation of the incompatible behavior forms and situational styles of problem-solving, that occur as a result of cultural changes. This evaluation is modernist in that it assumes that order and coherence are essential components of the self. However, Sebald also suggests that the incompatible behavior forms of youth could also be viewed as reflecting a different self ideal. He concedes that some writers characterize these behaviors as being functional within the framework of a "multiple-personae self"(p.53). According to this self ideal, diverse behaviors and even ethical points of view are interpreted as legitimate modes of response in a pluralistic world. From this perspective, struggling for coherence would be viewed as an maladaptive way of responding to the environment. Sebald's partial display of support for the multiple-personae self is consistent with the aforementioned postmodern themes of diversity and multiplicity.

Sebald's (1992) discussion also highlights the difficulty of articulating exactly what the postmodern view of the self-environment interaction actually is. The notions of diversity and multiplicity suggest that the postmodern person is not captured by the alienation experiences of victimization or rebellion. However, despite what one may infer from the multiple-personae self, the account of postmodernism which preceded this section implies that the relationship can neither be easily characterized as one of accomodation to the environment. Rather the aforementioned description of postmodernism implies there can be no self that stands apart from the environment. If our sense of reality is really only a product of modern culture, then it follows that the concept of the self cannot be supported outside of it. Some postmodern theorists hold that the self is an illusion that has been constructed to advance the modernist project (Lovlie, 1992). These writers argue that the concept of the self should be done away with in the interests of human liberation. However, others suggest that there may still be good reasons to retain the concept of the self (Lifton, 1993). This debate is taken up in the following sections.

Seeing Through The Self

Postmodern thinking was and still is articulated from different sources (Anderson, 1995a). Most people become acquainted with it through their involvement in the arts or academia. The following discussion reveals how developments in both of these areas contribute to the notion of a self whose defining traits could be exposed for the lack of substance behind them. We come to see through our selves because advances in logical argument show us that we could never have had them to begin with. And we come to see through our selves because rapid social changes cause us to reflect our necessary interdependence.

Seeing through the Author

Jacques Derrida's (cited in Gergen, 1991) academic writings challenge the modernist view of words as reflections of an individual's essences. For Derrida, words do not reflect the mind's operation in giving order to the chaos it takes in from the environment. Instead, language is seen as a system unto itself. Language existed before the individual and owes its existence to a collectivity. Individuals must engage in its communal conventions, in order for words to communicate any meaning. According to the modernist view, words could be employed in the service of elucidating essences, if they were based on the sound reason and observation of the communicator. In contrast, for Derrida (cited in Gergen), words "derive their capacity to create a seeming world of essences from the properties of the [language] system" (p.107).

Derrida (cited in Gergen, 1991) argues that the meaning of words derives from a process known as deconstruction. Deconstruction refers to the fact that all meanings are produced through a process of differing and deffering. For example, the meaning of the term democracy can be gained from drawing attention to terms that differ from it, like communism. At the same time, the meaning of democracy can also be gained by deferring to terms that are similar to it, such as justice. However, this process leads to another search for other meanings which differ and defer from communism and justice, respectively. And the process of textual manuevers continues in this way without us ever getting to the "real thing" (p.107) behind democracy. Since there is nothing that exists outside the texts of democracy, then democracy cannot be a "thing-in-itself". The constructed nature of the object of the author's word is thus exposed.

The process of deconstructing texts enables us to see through texts for the fundamentally open documents that they really are (Derrida, cited in Sampson, 1985). Deconstruction shows us that texts are constantly open to multiple interpretations, contrary to the appearance of fixity that they have assumed in our minds. If texts gain their meaning through their relationships with other texts, then it is the culture rather than the essence of a thing that dictates the range of possible meanings for it.

The exposure of the constructed nature of texts implies the exposure of the author, as well. If texts gain their meaning through their relationships with other texts, then what the author writes must have "always already" (Derrida, cited in Sampson, 1985, p.1208)

existed. And if texts are fundamentally open-ended, no one can claim to be the "final arbiter of meaning" (p.1208) for anything that they author. Thus the exposure of the text poses signficant challenges to the notions of authorship and authority. Or in the language of the self, the exposure of the text challenges the notions of uniqueness and mastery. If the texts of the culture are without original authors then actions do not proceed from authentic, individual agents. If the process of deconstruction applies to all those terms that seem to describe the essence of the mind (e.g., reason), then all of our thoughts must be mediated by cultural processes that are beyond our control. After all, the notion of individual selves is only made comprehensible by the fact that certain languages contain the pronouns I and You (Gergen, 1991). As Gergen explains, "I am only I by virtue of adopting the traditional pronoun in a culturally shared linguistic system" (p.110) Put another way, Derrida's argument demonstrates that words are not the vehicle by which humans speak their experience. Rather, humans could not have an experience if it were not for words (Lemert, 1997).

Derrida's ideas are consistent with developments in the literary, visual and performing arts. Lasch (1984) sees a trend towards an effacement of the artist's personality in the novels, painting and music of the 1950's onward. This effacement is the consequence of living in an environment that is saturated by media images. For example, in pop art, everyday objects are isolated from their everyday surroundings to drain them of "sense and context" (p.142). This effect is similar to the experience of images obtained by people subjected to prolonged media exposure. The reproduction of popular consumer images in a minimalist, devoid of affect style discourages the viewer from seeing the art as a reflection of the unique, inner talents of the artist. Rather the dependence of the art on the culture is unmistakable. The art and artist are demystifyed, in keeping with the mass production of the age.

Finally, the exposure of the self is reflected in the postmodern theories that were discussed previously. For example, in line with the above discussion on pop art, Baudrillard's (cited in Lemert, 1997) notion of hypperreality produces a view of the self as being dissolved by media images. As mentioned previously, hyperreality describes the situation in which people have become so impacted by media that they can no longer distinguish between simulations of reality and reality, itself. Hyperreality is a product of the fact that media depictions are driven less by actual events than by the histories of depiction itself. For example, our understanding of the Holocaust has been shaped by its myriad representations in books, TV and films. Each representation contributes its own reality to the original reality of events which actually took place. Over time, these realities accumulate creating a hyperreality in which the simulations of reality are ***experienced*** by people as more real than reality itself. We tend to act in our lives as though the families viewed on sit-coms constitute the reality of family life today. This occurs even though we may have never actually experienced a family that closely resembles those whom we watch.

The idea that we have entered into a period of hyperreality implies the possibility that our experience of the self may also be hyperreal. For what would be the reality of our thoughts if all of our characteristics of mind are subject to continual re-definition with each representation made of them? As Derrida's ideas on language similarly suggest, we can

hardly commit to acting rationally, if the meaning of rationality is constantly subject to new interpretations. Thus Baudrillard (cited in Lemert, 1997) suggests that the substance of the self dissolves into a collection of surface images. Like Derrida's texts, these images fail to refer to anything but other surface images. As a result our experience of self is "nowhere and everywhere at the same time, totally abstracted, rapidly flitting before us in myriad versions... a mere flick of the switch or flip of the channel offers us an array of 'we's' and 'them's' of what we were, are, and can be" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1994, p. 688).

Similarly, Lyotard suggests that the self does "not amount to much"(cited in Gubrium & Holstein, 1994, p.687). He contends that postmodernity is defined by an attitude of incredulity towards the metanarratives that Western culture tells to itself. As previously mentioned, these metanarratives constitute the generalized reality orientation of cultural members. They simultaneously function to suppress differences which threaten the modern order. Thus postmodernism is viewed as a condition of knowledge in which people have come to distrust these metanarratives. With respect to the self, postmodernism implies an incredulity towards the narratives of the self that are told by the social sciences. In other words, we no longer trust our theories of the self to be principally about the thing which they represent. The self thus loses its substantiality and becomes just another term among many for representing experience. Like Derrida's texts, or Baudrillard's images, it ceases to be an entity which cannot be supplanted by something else.

The Death of the Self ?

The challenge to authorship raised by Derrida, among others, resulted in a demand for the death of the concept of the self (Lovlie, 1992). As mentioned previously, the illusiveness of the self was judged to be harmful. If the meaning of a text is actually open-ended, then the countless, alternative interpretations to the seemingly fixed one are being ignored. For example, the history that most of us are taught in schools appears to us as a "fixed" interpretation of world events. However, this history is actually "local" in character; it is the stories of white men. By our acceptance of this interpretation, alternative interpretations, such as a feminist analysis, are subjugated. Similarly, forms of human experience which differ from the ideals of the centered self (e.g, intuition) are subjugated. The works of Derrida and his counterparts suggest that those who stand to gain the most from modernity have the most to lose by allowing alternative forms of experience to rival the modernist self (Lemert, 1997). If the self functions to suppress human differences, then there is no other recourse but to call for its demise. Behind Lyotard's (cited in Lemert) famous statement "Let us wage a war on totality ;... let us activate the differences and save the honor of the name" (p.40) is the notion that modernist narratives only created the illusion that the world was actually a whole. Rather, Lyotard contends that modern reality and by extension, the self, is a myth that acts to suppress the differences in social life.

Jacques Lacan's (cited in Lemert, 1997) revision of Freud's psychology develops the relationship of the self to society in more detail. Lacan suggests that the self is an illusion that the child gains as result of recognizing his or her image in the mirror. Before the child has an image of what he or she looks like, the child can only experience fragmentary feelings that are associated with concrete objects, such as the mother's breast. The act of recognizing

one's self in the mirror provides "the necessary illusion of [her] completeness" (p.52). The illusion of the self functions to ward against the otherwise dangerous feelings of fragmentation that come from one's experience of the environment. The notion that children need to gain the illusion of the self to ward off feelings which fragment psychological life proceeds from the idea that all of modern culture functions as a defense. All of the artifacts of modern culture, including the self, function to defend against differences which upset the belief in a "whole truth of the Good Society" (p.52). If people's psychological life is governed by the concept of the self, that is, if the idea of an integrated whole is experienced as fundamental, then they are more inclined to accept the modernist arrangement as the one and only, true and good, reality. In other words, the self facilitates the reification of modern reality.

The harm that can result from the self is not limited to suppressing human differences, however. Rather, environmental exploitation is seen to be encouraged by values such as individualism. Although the culture associates individualism with a strong democracy and economic wealth, the fact remains that it invites a "me-first attitude" (Gergen, 1991, p.97) that justifies the destruction of nature. It has also been argued that the self-other distinction serves as the basis for all forms of exploitation and domination (Kvale, 1992) In sum, the movement to proclaim the self as dead is connected to the postmodernist aim of liberating less dominant groups, forms of human potentiality and the natural environment.

Critics of this movement may not challenge the above arguments. Many tend agree with the utility of "the Self is dead" (Zweig, 1995, p. 145) idea as a "critical philosophical position" (Lovlie, 1992, p.20) That is, they agree with exposing the oppressive function of the self to prevent further unjustice in its name. However, they suggest that the self must not be done away with entirely. The self must not be pronounced dead because it remains the chief means by which we understand our experience (Lifton, 1993). For despite the lack of a sustaining rationale for modern culture, the modernist perspective and, in particular, its notion of self continues to dominate the lives of people in Western societies. [13] Support for the dominance of the self is found in the widespread popularity of self-help books and concern with privacy (Baumeister, 1985). It is also manifest in the practise of defending an "emotional core", that is, the idea that we possess and express "real" feelings (Gubrium & Holstein, 1995). Moreover, the self is considered to be such a "central part of our horizon" (Cushman, 1990, p.59) that many fail to recognize it as a legitimate subject of study. The most compelling evidence for this position, however, is that the Western vocabulary of understanding persons lacks the terms to express alternative ways of being. For example, our vocabulary curtails our ability to understand modes of being based on relatedness. As Gergen (1991) observes, "it is the individual who has hopes, fears, wishes, ... These are the terms by which we understand daily life ...We ask about Bob's 'feelings' towards Sarah" (p.160) not "whether a relationship can have hopes, fear, or wishes...."(p.160).

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[13] In fact, with the global pervasiveness of Western mass media, the idea of the self is also penetrating the lives of Non-Western people.

The suppression of relatedness in this example demonstrates why many postmodernists call for the death of the self. However, it simultaneously demonstrates the harm that can also come from actually doing away with it. In the absence of another widely-shared vocabulary, many people's current experience would become unintelligible. This includes people who are most oppressed by the self, such as those belonging to marginalized groups. While the notion of the death of the self could most certainly be employed towards the emancipation of these groups, the demise of the concept could not facilitate an entirely better way of capturing their experiences. For the experiences of such individuals within Western societies must still be understood as ones which are reactive to the modernist experience of self. Thus even though the concept of the self has come to be challenged by postmodern developments, it remains our "only means of examining struggles with structure, coherence and fragmentation" (Lifton, 1993, p.212).

Moreover, Derrida and his counterparts, paradoxically affirm the self in the act of delivering its death (Lovlie, 1992). They accomplish this through the exercise of rationality and subjectivity that lay beneath their actions in exposing the self. Their act of deconstruction affirms the "critical" (p.132) subject through demolishing the "epistemic" (p.132) subject as the "center of the world" (p.132). In other words, their very act of criticism requires some presence in addition to the use of modern intellectual resources. However, although they demonstrate a capacity for rationality, their rationality is of a different character than the one typically associated with the Enlightenment / Neo-Enlightenment. By displaying a critical use of the faculty of reason in academic work, they demonstrate that rationality can be reconstrued for different ends.

The different take on rationality raises the possibility of a self that need not be as oppressive as its predecessor. Lifton's (1993) concept of the symbolizing self is a case in point. The activity that is presumed by the abovementioned acts of critique and reconstruing traits highlights the symbol making function of humans. The conclusions about the death of mastery and uniqueness that were drawn from Derrida's writing obscure the individual's essentially active and distinctive means of processing the world. Lifton observes that our only means of taking in the world occurs through the process of symbolically transforming experience. We do not passively process the environment through the straightforward reception of given structures. Rather as Derrida's writing demonstrated, symbol systems such as language are the means through we are able to possess experience. Thus, humans actively reconstitute environmental experience through the use of language and other symbolic forms. This activity takes on a distinctive character because the form of a person's symbolizations derive from his or her previous experience. Giddens (1991) echoes this view. He observes that humans continuously reflect on and reconstitute external events, in light of their particular circumstances. Lifton suggests that the self, with its essential capacity for symbolizing, can be thought of as the mechanism through which transformations of experience can occur in ways that fit with one's previous experiences : "The self becomes an engine of symbolization as it continuously receives, re-creates, and extends all that it encounters"(p.28). Thus the notion of a symbolizing self makes it possible for individual agency to be constituted in the interpretation of experiences as opposed to a "centered source of action"(Gubrium & Holstein, 1995, p.556).

Lifton's (1993) concept of the symbolizing self is not incommensurable with the challenge to mastery and uniqueness posed by Derrida. After all, the open-ended nature of texts depends upon the symbolizing capacity of humans. That is, the multiple interpretations of texts are made possible because individuals bring their distinctive symbolizations to them. Thus the symbolizing self allows us to appropriately understand ourselves through the metaphor of the individual self, while simultaneously acknowledging our dependence on cultural forms (i.e., language). It accounts for an individual agency that is fundamentally relational. For as Giddens (1991) points out, the individual and culture cannot be mutually exclusive ontologies. Since neither one can be subtracted from the other and still exist, it makes little sense to suggest that they *act on* one another in the way that discrete entities could.

Not only do Derrida's writings tend to obscure the individual's role in interpreting texts but they also downplay the fact that it is individuals who create the texts in the first place. As mentioned previously, Derrida sees texts as structured by rules that are internal to the language system itself. Individuals are therefore seen as being constituted by the texts of the culture. By following the aforementioned idea about texts, Derrida fails to account for the fact that humans put language to practical use in their everyday affairs. As Burkitt (1994) observes, "language is not just a system of signs that bears no relation to anything beyond it, but it is a practical instrument that has a use for human beings within the whole range of their activities"(p.14). Thus contrary to Derrida's notion of nothing existing ouside of text, there must actually be a community of people engaging in social interaction around actual objects. Without this engagement between individuals, there could never have been the meanings that already exist. Nor could there be those which are constantly being produced and reproduced. Hence as Burkitt writes, "self is not, then , purely a creation of discourse but a product of social relations ... As human selves we do not just experience ourselves as textual but as ... embodied agents with capacities that have causal effects in the natural and social world"(p.15)[14]

The above considerations have led some analysts to conclude that postmodernism should not imply the death of the self. Though this perspective may come to reflect our future experience, our current lived experience suggests that it is perhaps more useful to advocate the decline of our modernist configuration of the self. That is, rather than do away with the entire concept of the self, it may be more appropriate to suggest that the ideals of the centered subject are on the wane.

The remainder of this chapter takes up the question of what can remain of the self in an era characterized by the decline of the centered ideal. What could be the lived experience of such a self - a self that is only defined by what it is losing? Could it be positive as the above suggestion of reconstruing traits would imply? Or might one feel as though he or she is always on the verge of falling apart? The former, optimistic view is proposed by theorists who are often described as being postmodern. However, proponents of the latter view

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[14] In fact, Derrida's own observations about text reproduction in the pre-printing press era also attest to the unique activity of humans. Each original text became a new creation with each copier that was assigned to reproduce it. The embellishments that were made to each new "reproduction" were nothing else but the distinctive creations of the individual copier.

describe the effects of postmodern social processes, from a modernist or even pre-modernist point of view.

Falling And Swimming

Both the optimistic and pessimistic takes on the decentered self posit a self characterized by multiplicity or fragmentation. The difference between them lies in the fact that the latter, modernist analyses lament the loss of the authentic, rational self. This lament stems from the fact that modernists see unity, coherence, and distinctiveness as essential self components. In contrast, postmodernists sees these notions as increasingly difficult to sustain. For postmodernist theorists of the self, fragments constitute a way of life that does not carry strongly negative connotations. Because the value of the optimistic and pessimistic outlooks on the self boils down to which lens (modernist or postmodernist) you see the world through, they cannot really be contrasted. Although I will offer some critical observations following the description of views which fall in each camp, an actual "testing out" of the different points of view occurs in the next chapter.

Before turning to an explanation of the different views, I believe it would be useful to give a brief overview of the specific postmodern changes that are seen as influential by both optimists and pessimists alike. Although I previously described the broad events that have prompted the changes to modern culture, the more specific developments with respect to mass media, technologies, consumerism and cultural / historical dislocation are the focus of the following theories. These changes accelerated the spreading of postmodern ideas over the last few decades.

What has been called the "mass media revolution" (Lifton, 1993, p.17) refers to the vast number of media images and ideas that bombard the individual from all sides. The protagonist in Penelope Lively's (cited in Lifton, 1993) City of the Mind reflects this experience: "He twitchs the knob of his radio: New York speaks to him, five hours ago, is superceded by Australia tomorrow and presently by India this evening...For him the world no longer turns; there is no day or night, everything and everywhere is instantaneous...He is told so much and from so many different sources that he has learned to disregard, to let information filter through his mind and vanish, leaving impressions - a phrase, a fact, and image" (p.20). Proponents of both the optimistic and pessimistic views suggest that these media experiences are constitutive of the fragments of the self. The self becomes "populated" (Gergen, 1991, p.48) by far more ideas than was ever possible in the era of face to face communities. In such communities, ideas about one's capacities were gained exclusively from the limited number of people one encountered in his or her narrow, geographical area. The development of computers, fax machines, and other communication technologies are also seen as contributing to this expansion in self and relationships. These technologies allow individuals to encounter and stay in touch with more people at an ever faster rate.

The change from a production to consumption oriented society is another important feature of these theories. Like Côté and Allahar (1994), these writers address the psychological effects of being resocialized as a consumer. They also focus on the identity or

"lifestyle" (Cushman, 1990, p.605) conferring function of consumer products. Finally, cultural / historical dislocation refers to the "breakdown of social and institutional arrangements that ordinarily anchor human lives"(Lifton, 1993, p.14). This concept incorporates the decline of family and other cultural authorities that Sebald (1990) focuses on. However, it also encompasses the dislocation that can result from such events as wars and epidemics. Some theorists even discuss the effects that the threat of nuclear annihilation can have on the individual's experience of self. As Lifton observes, the imagery of world extinction in previous societies spoke to the human capacity for both destruction and renewal. However, writings about the nuclear age are necessarily characterized only by the former.

Falling Apart

Writers who assume a pessimistic stance suggest that the decline of the modernist self invariably results in painful feelings of fragmentation and/or disintegration. The first three perspectives reviewed here suggest that the self is experienced as reduced or diminished as a consequence of changes to the modernist environment. The fourth perspective critiques postmodern multiplicity, by comparing it to clinical disorders of the self.

The Empty Self

Philip Cushman (1990) suggests that the current configuration of the self is one which has been constructed as "empty" (p.599) This configuration stems partially from the cultural / historical dislocation that was brought on by urbanization and industrialization. Urbanization and industrialization prompted the decline of traditional authorities and anchors in people's lives. Among these were the decline of the extended family and religion. The decline of these sources resulted in experiences of emptiness and meaninglessness. Cushman contends that following World War II, people have exhibited an unprecendented need to fill such emptiness. This growing need is attributed to credit and marketing. In order for the United States to make the transition into a viable peace-time economy, credit was introduced to encourage spending during the postwar recession. However, credit alone was not sufficient for the much required consumerism that the postwar economy is based on. Rather people also needed to be taught what to buy. That is, they had to learn to perceive a need for the new electronic "conveniences" (p.603) that were being put on the market. Thus the market fuels people's pre-existing feelings of neediness by suggesting that they always need consumer products. As Cushman observes, "credit is only necessary when the individual's wish to buy outstrips his or her capital. Individuals do not wish to buy if they do not perceive a need for a product. But with an empty self people *always* need"(p.604).

Cushman (1990) suggests that people's inner emptiness is expressed in many ways, besides chronic consumerism. These include low self-esteem, values confusion, eating disorders and drug abuse. However, he suggests that consumerism may be the most popular form of expression because advertising preys specifically on people's vulnerabilities to cultural messages about how to be. According to Cushman, ads offer the "lifestyle solution"(p.605). The lifestyle solution refers to the fact that ads sell products by associating

them with the lifestyles conveyed by the ad's actors or celebrity endorsers. These ads suggest to the viewer that his or her life can be transformed to something like the celebrity's, by purchasing the product in question. Cushman argues that the lifestyle solution offers people an illusory cure to their feelings of emptiness. The lifestyle solution acts as a poor substitute for the "web of meaning"(p.605) that traditional cultures use for healing. The web of meaning refers to the songs, stories, rituals and beliefs that teach the society's cultural frame of reference. Advertising offers individuals only the exchange of one superficial identity for another, by encouraging their perceived need to constantly buy different "lifestyle"objects. Thus like Côté and Allahar (1994), Cushman sees one's sense of identity as becoming fragmented by the need to attend to all of the different media images that are coming his or her way. However, this inner need is borne from the cultural/ historical dislocation that Sebald emphasized. In fact, the empty self could be read as the social constructionist but still modernist self configuration that serves as a backdrop for identity theories like those of Sebald and Côté and Allahar.

The Minimal Self

Christopher Lasch (1984) is also critical of the effects of the media, consumerism, and cultural / historical dislocation. He suggests that the rapid social changes that are associated with postmodernism have resulted in people feeling oppressed by large social systems. Individuals perceive such systems as systems of total control over which they can exert no influence and are completely dependent. For example, Lasch suggests that mass consumerism promotes chronic feelings of passivity, self-scrutiny,and disorientation. Like Cushman (1990), he refers to the need, brought on by industrialism, to re-socialize individuals as consumers. This reeducation process had the effect of discouraging individuals from relying on their own resources and trusting their own judgments as to what they need to be happy. To ensure an ever available market, industries need to be constantly engaged in tutoring the individual in the latest consumer offerings. This instruction is provided by such "experts" (p.29) as market researchers and pollsters who suggest what others prefer and therefore what the consumer in question should prefer. The continual indoctrination by outside authorities undermines the consumer's own confidence in his or her ability to independently understand and act on the world to provide for one's self.

The consumer feels compelled to submit his or her self to the chronic uneasiness and anxiety brought on by this process because he or she knows that one is primarily judged by one's possessions and "personality" rather than one's "character" (Lasch, 1984, p.30). Moreover, because the current consumer encounters an "information overload" with respect to the number of expert opinions available, the consumer comes to feel that he or she "lives in a world that defies practical understanding and control"(p.33).

Mass consumerism also encourages self-fragmentation by encouraging a blurring between the self and its surroundings. Contrary to the postmodern view of the self's merger with the environment, Lasch (1984) sees this merger as invariably promoting a disturbing experience of self-disintegration. His evaluation of the self-environment merger stems from the assumptions of psychoanalytic theory. According to psychoanalytic theory, the self's distinctiveness from the social world must be preserved for the individual to experience a

sense of well-being. Lasch sees the unprecedented attention that is given to the superficial images of the media as partially responsible for the growing confusion between self and not-self. The images that bombard the consumer cause him or her to experience increasing difficulty in perceiving an independent, outside reality that does not exist except in connection with his or her desires. We become prone to see the world for what it can deliver for the self because the media advertises products as means for attaining desirable lifestyles. The substance of the actual object becomes dissolved as the images focus our attention on the product's lifestyle value as opposed to its utility.

However, it is not only ads that encourage consumers to perceive the material world outside themselves as an extension or projection of themselves. Rather the very nature of commodity production also discourages perception of the independent existence of objects. Lasch (1984) observes that commodities are often produced so as to wear out quickly and/or be superceded by new developments. Unlike durable goods, they are unable to "'withstand, 'stand against' and endure, at least for a time, the voracious needs and wants of their living makers and users" (p.31). Thus the insubstantial nature of both images and actual products functions to dissolve what Lasch sees as a necessary boundary between the self and its surroundings.

Such dissolution results in the narcissistic personality. Having lost an abiding sense of self, through submission to expert judgments and the alternately gratifying and frustrating experiences of merging with the external world, the narcissist depends on continual signs of approval to bolster a highly uncertain sense of self-worth. He or she experiences life as a discrete set of events, that is disconnected from any sense of past. Feelings of grandiosity alternate with feelings of emptiness and inauthenticity. The narcissist has a limited understanding of the needs of others. Though the narcissist demands intimacy from others, he or she is unable to reciprocate such closeness. He or she cultivates emotional detachment in order to maintain a fragile sense of self.[15] As Lifton (1993) observes, "so absorbed in its own struggle to hold together, the fragmenting self is unable to be concerned with others and tends to be unable to mobilize the cohesiveness to perform the empathic act" (p.206).

Emotional detachment is only one among many "survival" strategies that are engaged in by individuals subject to postmodern conditions. Lasch (1984) suggests that the feelings of powerlessness, beleagurement and anxiety that these conditions engender prompts people to enact defensive strategies, which are patterned after individuals who have been forced to confront situations of great adversity. These defensive behaviors are the characteristics of the "minimal self". Persons with the minimal self restrict their self-expression and social involvement. For example, Lasch suggests that people become preoccupied over small matters and exaggerate their effects, because they feel that they can do nothing about larger social problems. Because they perceive the future to be "so troubling that it hardly bears looking into"(p.73), they prefer to concern themselves with more immediate and manageable issues than the threat of nuclear war, for example. In this way, they are able to preserve at least some margin of control in their lives.

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[15] Industries not only promote narcissism but fuel it by promising the exact things that the narcissist desires. The narcissist is promised attractiveness and personal popularity through the consumption of goods and services.

Other survival strategies include taking things one day at a time, proteanism, protective irony, and paranoia. Being absorbed in the immediate concerns of one's day to day existence provides better chances of long-term survival. As Lasch (1984) observes, people dare not think too often of the past, lest they suffer a debilitating nostalgia for its security and certainty. Proteanism refers to adopting different roles as a function of the different situations one encounters. Lasch suggests that this social multiplicity performs a protective function similar to that served by the chameleon's change of colors. Role-playing "protects the self against unseen enemies, keeps feelings in check and controls threatening situations" (p.97). The role of an ironic, detached observer functions to protect people from the knowledge that they themselves are being victimized. It also acts to control any expression of emotions that could provoke one's oppressors (eg., big business, government) into further acts of victimization. Finally, the person with a minimal self may engage in paranoid searches for hidden meanings. Lasch observes that people in the postmodern world may be inclined to "dig" for such meaning, because the activity of digging "pointless as it is, may be the only thing that keeps you alive" (p.155) An increased tendency to believe in "plots" and conspiracies occurs because the condition in which nothing is connected to anything else is not one that the self can sustain for long.

The Totalistic Self

Paranoia can also be a feature of the totalistic self. In this form of a reduced self, the self is seen as contracting to embrace a one dimensional way of seeing the world. The person with the totalistic self is characterized by his or her leap into a totalistic ideological system. Fundamentalist religions, new age movements, cults and the conspiracy theories of paranoids may all be seen as varieties of such a system. As has already been implied about paranoia, these systems are ones in which all knowledge appears to fit together. They provide a lens through which nearly everything can be explained. As Lifton (1993) describes, "they press towards a purity that must be attained but is unattainable" (p.168) These internally consistent systems reflect fairly unambiguous realities from which a sense of meaning and security can be derived.

For example, Cushman (1990) points to the increasing involvement of people in fundamentalist religions, cults, and the new age movement as evidence of the need for a meaningful identity. He sees such involvements as attempts to fill the emptiness induced by cultural / historical dislocation. Like consumerism, they are seen as poor substitutes for the "web of meaning" that is found in traditional cultures. Cushman sees individuals as getting trapped into these potentially exploitative[16] systems because no other truly viable alternatives are provided to them by the culture.

Lifton (1993) also observes that fundamentalists embrace religion as a way of overcoming feelings of fragmentation brought on by prevailing social conditions. Fundamentalism opposes the pluralism that is encouraged by postmodern influences. Lifton notes that fundamentalist movements are called forth by a perception that sacred dimensions

[16] Cushman observes that those with the empty self may be especially susceptible to the highly charismatic personalities of religious, cult and new age leaders.

of the self and community are dying or being "killed" by changes in the culture. A sacred, pre-modern past is valued for its clear, orderly and "pure" (p.164) instruction on how to live a good life and be rewarded for it. "Fundamentalists are told 'how to have a Christian marriage, what to teach Christian children, what is permissible in Christian socializing'; they are offered 'a sheltering canopy against the chaos they perceive not only without but 'sometime within their own souls'"(p.168) Thus fundamentalism provides the explanations that can put the fragments of the self back together again.

Also contrary to Lasch's (1984) observation that people are strategically avoiding thoughts of the past is Anderson's (1995b) views of people in the new age movement. Anderson sees new agers or "neo-romantics" (p.114) (as he refers to them) as being highly attuned to the past. Or more accurately, they hearken back to a fantasized Golden Age, occuring well before the Industrial Revolution and Enlightenment. This Age is characterized by human reverence for nature. The forms of neo-romanticism has features of earlier romanticism such as the mystique of the noble savage. However these features are expressed in the more contemporary forms of environmentalism and pagan spirituality. In line with Lifton's observations about fundamentalism, neo-romanticism is held to express "not only a deep disaffection for modern civilization but also a reluctance to take on the uncertainties of postmodernism" (p.114).

Lasch (1984) and others who assume a negative stance on postmodern influences suggest that the forms of the totalistic self attest to a fundamental need for a meaningful, unified and stable identity. Or they suggest that even if the self is an illusion, it must be a construct necessary for good mental health (Layton, 1995). It would be difficult to maintain a belief in a era which never existed, especially in light of the dominant scientific outlook which refutes it, if finding meaning wherever possible was not a compelling need. Similarily, one would not continue to "dig" voraciously to expose conspiracies, especially as the "search for patterns and connections turns back on itself in tightening circles" (Lasch, p.155).

The Disordered Self

Lasch's (1984) view of proteanism as a defensive strategy is not the only reason that modernist commentators see the self's multiplicity in a bad light. Instead of focusing on the origins of such multiplicity, these writers draw attention to the actual lived experience of fragmentation. They refer to the forms of psychological fragmentation, seen in schizophrenia and multiple personality disorder (MPD), in defense of their views. As mentioned previously, these criticisms are expressed in reaction to postmodern celebrations of multiplicity.

Baudrillard's (cited in Glass, 1993) writings represent the kind of championing of multiplicity that these critics love to hate. In the wake of the death of the self, Baudrillard advocates that people embrace their self fragments as these fragments constitute the truly authentic human condition of multiplicity and diversity. By embracing our disembodied simulations of reality, we escape having others (eg., the forces of modernity) define and therefore control our potentialities. The embrace of intrinisically meaningless images

amounts to experiencing life in all its contingency, as a game in which our surface images constitute the pieces to be played with. Baudrillard advocates constant metamorphosis - nothing short of a continuing indeterminacy of being should be our experience. One should be fluid, unconstrained or, in other words, multiple. Thus Baudrillard's call for the celebration of fragmentation exists in direct opposition to Lasch's revolt over the blurring of the self and its surface.

Postmodern cultural critiscism has similarily been observed to make heroes out of indeterminate characters. The characters of the texts being critiqued are often socially marginal characters, like the transvestite or sadomasochist (Layton, 1995). These characters are seen as having made a creative and celebratory experience out of their positioning as fluid outsiders. For example, in the film, Paris is Burning, black and hispanic, gay male youth perform in drag queen "balls", deserved of much aesthetic and artistic acclaim. Such characters perform the important cultural function of challenging "heterosexism, reified notions of gender identity, repressed forms of sexual expression, [and] the hypocrises of a puritan, yet violent, culture" (p.110).

Such celebrations of multiplicity have been challenged by those who work with patients of MPD. Glass (1993), for example, decries the fact that postmodernists call for multiplicity, "without taking into account the psychological effects of literally living with multiple (discrete) selves" (p.260). Glass suggests that patients with MPD demonstrate how terrifying it is to actually live as though the world lacked boundaries and meaning. Just as the hyperreal self would experience no sense of causality or structure in its series of static images, so does the MPD patient lack anything that could tie together her[17] personalities, or ground them in some sense of continuous history. Far from experiencing the constant shifting of personalities as liberating, the MPD patient experiences the disconnectedness of her life as "an endlessly disintegrating process" (p.278). Like Lasch's (1984) paranoids, it is precisely the *search* for meaning that frees them from their misery. Thus Glass argues that it is necessary to make a distinction between the ideology of playing with one's fragments and actually being *psychologically* contingent. Glass implies that the experience of MPD may attest to causality and structure being truly essential properties of the self, as opposed to being only ideologically defined. Others (e.g., Layton, 1995) suggest that even if the self is an illusion, the pain caused by the lack of such properties imply that they are constructions essential to emotional well-being.

Layton (1995) also criticizes postmodern commentators for glossing over the pain of fragmentation. She cautions against making heroes of fluid cultural outsiders. She argues that such writings fail to take note of how pain often marks the celebratory and creative expressions of such individuals. For example, few commentators questioned why the young gay men of Paris is Burning, many of whom left abusive homes, banded together to form nuclear-style families. As Layton observes, beyond the play and critique of postmodern creation, there is also "longing"(p.110). Though potentially liberating, one's fragments are nevertheless reified in certain ways. For example, gender fragments are rigidly coded with male and female stereotypes, thus accounting for why gender indeterminacy "usually reflects

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[17] The vast majority of people diagnosed as having MPD are women (Layton, 1995).

severe conflict about taking on a gender identity" (p.113). Hence cultural forces may cause even our experiences of diversity to be infused with pain.

Commentary

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the validity of the falling apart perspective depends on the cultural lens (modernist or postmodernist) from which one approaches it. As Gergen (1991) notes, "one cannot mount what might be called a 'pure' or 'transcendent' evaluation of our emerging condition" (p.230). That is, we cannot answer, for example, whether the loss of coherence is a good or bad thing, without having a perspective that assigns value to particular criteria. If we are inside modernism, then the loss of coherence is to be lamented. However, if we look out at the world through a postmodernist lens, then the loss of coherence is not necessarily bad. Rather as Baudrillard's writings suggest the loss of coherence can allow for a liberating experience of indeterminacy of being. Thus, I cannot favor Lasch's (1984) negative stance towards postmodern changes unless I agree with his reliance on modernist, psychoanalytic theory. If I reject the idea of a fundamental self-object separation, claiming it instead as a purely ideological construction, then I cannot conclude that postmodernism necessarily spells disaster. On the other hand, if I perceive the world through modernist glasses, then I would be inclined to agree with Lasch and his counterparts' predictions of falling apart.

Similarly, Glass' (1993) use of MPD as testimony to the existence of essential self properties is also impossible to evaluate. We cannot evaluate Glass' suggestion that structure and casusality can refer to something other than cultural constructs, because MPD cannot be understood outside of a cultural context. For example, one could argue that the experience of MPD itself is a product of a world which demands coherence and stability, and therefore labels that which fails to conform, as pathological. Although Glass would probably counter this suggestion by argung that it is extreme trauma that releases the multiplicity of MPD patients, it is nevertheless still possible to interpret the multiplicity as a subjugated self potentiality. This potentiality may be released to help cope with the trauma[18] . Rather than suggest that the pain of MPD invariably reflects the absence of essential self structure, one could propose that because of the way that this potentiality is codified in the culture, it is experienced as terrifying. If we lived in a society in which people did not expect us to be reliable and consistent and we did not internalize these as important ways of being, would we necessarily see or experience such multiplicity as dysfunctional?

Having noted the foregoing limitations on evaluation, there are still several observations which can be made that call into the question the extent to which these writers take their dire pronouncements.These observations point to an inadequate view of human agency. Like Côté and Allahar, they appear to pay insufficient attention to the role of human reflexivity and symbolization. As was noted in the preceding chapter regarding young people's responses to media, humans do not respond in identical, totalizing ways to social processes. Contrary to Cushman (1990) and Lasch (1984), passivity and dependency are not the only responses that occur to large social systems. Rather, despite how powerful these

[18] This has not been an uncommon interpretation of dissociation.

systems are, humans reinterpret their messages in light of their personal circumstances (Giddens, 1991). They assign their unique symbolizations to them in the act of processing new experiences. As Gubrium and Holstein (1995) put it, individuals do not face the media "without mediating social circumstances and 'symbolic work' of their own" (p.555).

For example, we fail to observe everyone as being engaged with obsessive dieting and exercising, despite the powerful media prescription of a slim figure. Although Lasch (1984) might argue that the pervasive concern with respect to body image alone is sufficient support for his argument, Giddens argues that concern over body planning should not automatically be interpreted as narcisssism. Rather, Giddens (1991) suggests that body planning be interpreted as a feature of postmodern social life, that people are required to engage in, as part of their reflexive self-construction. Although body planning itself is not an option, people must select from what the culture tells them about how to fashion their bodies. Thus the continuum of displays of concern over body image can be interpreted as the product of the different interpretations people have made regarding these messages. That is, people can be observed to reinterpret and reconstitute their received messages in the effort to construct their identities. The experience that Giddens describes is thus far from the picture of someone unable to rely on his or her own judgment. Rather, body planning reflects more of an engagement with the outside world than a defensive retreat.

Moreover, this self-construction is made easier by the number of options that are made available to us by virtue of postmodern developments (Giddens, 1991). Lasch (1984) rejects the notion of greater freedom through the proliferation of more choices. He suggests that the availability of technological advancements creates only the illusion of greater choice. For example, instead of the car being experienced as another option among other means of transportation, it has come to largely replace other means of travel. The reduction of choice with increasing advancements occurs because industries seek to convince consumers of the superiority of the products which they are selling. Although it is clearly in the best interest of retailers to acheive this kind of standardization, the process is far from complete in today's capitalist societies. As Gubrium and Holstein (1995) observe, "the totalized media of postmodern thinking where 'TV is the world' do not speak in one voice" (p.555). Moreover, technologies like the Internet, for example, allow for the communication of an unprecedented diversity of messages regarding what to consume. The Internet even provides a forum for subversive commentary, urging minimal to no involvement in mass consumption. Although it is arguable that such anti-materialist messages still lack the force of the dominant imperative to consume, the Internet nevertheless makes resisting messages from large social systems easier than ever before. Going "on-line" can thus be seen as providing one with more material which can be used to reflexively make one's self.

Furthermore, rather than curb one's influence on the environment, the internet and other technologies extend a greater number of invitations to participate with the larger social world. Lasch (1984) cites television polls as an example of how the media subverts election results while providing people with the illusion of freely choosing their leaders. However, it was Chinese students' savvy use of televisual media that drew worldwide attention to Tianneman Square (Lemert, 1997). Faxes and e-mail also allow for individuals to gain support for their endeavors by connecting with people around the world.

The foregoing observations thus suggests how postmodern changes can also allow for the reappropriation of power. But the facilitiation of individual empowerment by society occurs not only through the use of large systems. Powerful as such influences are, they have not entirely supplanted the influence of micro-settings on people lives. Rather as Gubrium and Holstein (1995) observe "everyday interpretive practice reflexively constructs agency, utilizing resources draw from the ordinary contours of experience" (p.555). In constructing agency, people make use of what is shared and available in their immediate circumstances. For example, they may make use of the language of a group like Alcoholics Anonymous. By presenting themselves as "recovered alcoholics" they convey selves intended to be understood as "permanently troubled yet manageable with the proper effort and guidance" (p.559). Support groups and counselling sessions are also common sites for the use of "biographical particulars"(p.559) in constructing agency. These include the use of prior experiences that can act as resources for coping with future problems.

Furthermore, traditional social institutions and "new"social movements also counter the idea of victimization as a mass phenomenon. While Cushman (1990) laments the breakdown of the family, Giddens suggests that it is premature to deliver its eulogy. He suggests that individuals are constructing new forms of familial relations that constitute a "massive process of institutional reconstitution" (Giddens, 1991, p.177). "'Recombinant families', no longer being organized in terms of pre-established gender divisions, are being created; rather than form a chasm between a previous and a future mode of existence, divorce is being mobilized as a resource to create networks drawing together new partners and former ones, biological children and stepchildren, friends and other relatives" (p.177). Such restructuring thus suggests that people do not necessarily experience cultural/historical dislocation as creating an inner void of meaning. Similarily, the emergence of feminist, and gay rights, among other movements, also demonstrate that the influence of large social systems does not go unchallenged.

Those who lament the totalistic self may also exaggerate the damage wrought by postmodern changes. These writers see the forms of the totalistic self as reflecting impoverished modes of coping, that leave them especially susceptible to exploitation.[19] Alternatively, the fact that individuals are driven to dig in vain for meaning is focused on to draw attention to the way that the culture is failing its members. However, these writers fail to appreciate the most significant way in which totalistic self forms reveal themselves as ineffective coping for postmodern anxieties.
Contrary to the assumptions of these writers, fundamentalism, new age movements or cults are unlikely to be entirely successful in leaving their followers without doubt. Media saturation ensures that people can no longer be immune to the knowledge that any faith is but one choice among other possibilities (Anderson, 1995a).

However, the fact that one can no longer be a completely true believer need not be cause for serious concern. Rather the act of digging in vain for meaning could alternatively be seen as the struggle to "find and assert symbols"(Lifton, 1993. p.162) or "construct and

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[19] They are susceptible to exploitation by charismatic leaders of cults and fundamentalist movements.

recover meaning" (p.162). Because totalistic systems fail to provide comprehensive meaning, on account of the challenges posed by other meanings, the self must constantly be involved in a defensive construction of meaning. For example, fundamentalists who believe in the apocalypse are often confronted with having to answer for a dissonance that exists between their belief in an end-time and fears about nuclear holocaust. They are thus forced to invent explanations for the incoherence, if totalism is to be a solution that is at all comforting. As Lifton observes, fundamentalism tends to be "active and transformative as the relative latitude of the larger society, however condemned, is always available to subvert the tightly controlled fundamentalist family" (p.166). The neo-romantics that Anderson refers to must also face the same predicament. These individuals must forever have to defend their views against incompatible scientific and historical evidence. Thus although individuals with the totalistic self may reject the notion that they are constructing meaning, this may nevertheless be their experience[20].

The critical mental activity required by individuals with the totalistic self may guard against exploitation by charismatic leaders. Individuals must closely examine the reasons for their faith in the process of inventing explanations to defend it. This close and critical examination also predicts that long-term commitment to totalistic belief systems will be unlikely. Exposure to the lack of logic behind many fundamentalist tenets accounts for why individual commitment to fundamentalism often fails to endure across lifetimes (Lifton,1993). However, the kind of intellectual activity that is gained to defend one's views could facilitate more viable ways of reflexive self-construction in the future.

Finally, the conclusions reached by those who use MPD as an example of the lived experience of postmodern multiplicity must also be looked upon with caution. MPD has been judged to be an inappropriate model for such multiplicity because it represents such an extreme manifestation of fragmentation (Lifton, 1993). It appears especially inappropriate as a model for the notions of multiplicity expressed in postmodern theories which do not demand a complete decimation of the self (these theories are discussed in the following section). One could also question whether it is fair to equate the pain of multiplicity invoked by events like sexual abuse with the pain of multiplicity invoked by efforts to silence diversity (Layton, 1995). Of course, the answers to these questions would be rendered immaterial by the determination of MPD as a hoax. Many former patients have argued that their MPD diagnosis was a product of false memories that were implanted by their therapists.

Swimming Even Wallowing...

The preceding title derives from a description of postmodernism by David Harvey (cited in Lifton, 1993). What Harvey actually said was that the postmodernist "swims, even wallows in the fragmentary and chaotic currents of change " (p.8). Harvey's quote captures the kind of self-configurations that are reviewed in this section. All four forms that are discussed emphasize the adaptive and liberating potential of postmodern changes. This

[20] Some of the fundamentalists that Lifton (1993) interviewed admitted that the meanings of their faith may have been constructed by others. For example, a pastor states that "if its a fairytale, its a fairytale in which I've found hope" (p.177)

potential is about maximizing the benefits that can be accrued from all the different ways of being that one becomes exposed to in postmodernity. The first self-configuration, the pastiche self, fails to construe the waters as being at all like the chaotic currents that modernists' experience. However, the remainder of the forms (protean, narrative and relational) acknowledge a mix of modernist and postmodernist streams in need of negotiation.

The Pastiche Self

The pastiche[21] self turns the falling apart perspective on its head. Rather than see the self's bombardment by images as resulting in narcissistic self-disintegration, Gergen (1991) suggests that media saturation be more positively construed as creating various, different "potentials to be". The self incorporates new behavioral possibilities through exposure to the media. We learn the habits of Japanese businessmen, the political views of gay activists, and how relationships are conducted between mothers and daughters. Our internalization of such messages result in us becoming pastiches, or "imitative assemblages" (p.150) of one another. If conditions are favorable, we can release these potentialities into action. As Gergen puts it, the pastiche personality is a "social chameleon, constantly borrowing bits and pieces of identity from whatever sources are available and constructing them as useful or desirable in a given situation" (p.150). In addition to relying on media messages for new opportunities, the pastiche self exploits communication technologies to give expression to the self-interests being accumulated. As these technologies are utilized, they add further to the collection of potentials by putting us in touch with more people and therefore more ways of being.

Thus far from Cushman's (1990) evaluation of the self as empty, the pastiche self is overly saturated with meanings. The multiplicity of self-interests accumulated by pastiche individuals amounts to a self that swims in "ever-shifting...currents of being" (Gergen, 1991, p.139). Cushman argues that it is the world of fashion that drives consumers into constantly updating and adjusting their wardrobes. However, the person with the pastiche self shops for new clothes because they serve as "means of being" in an constantly shifting array of social contexts. Just as Giddens (1991) observes about body planning, shopping for clothing can be interpreted as a means of active self-construction. In this context, the concept of buying a product because it is associated with a particular "lifestyle" (Cushman, p.605) need not be lauded.

Moreover, contrary to Lasch's (1994) assumption of multiplicity as a self-protective strategy, the pastiche self is seen as adaptive and gratifying. Proponents suggest that the rapid acceleration of cultural change demands a new orientation to the self, one that replaces the view of "'stability of self (self as object)' with 'change of self (self as process)'" (Zurchner, cited in Gergen, 1991, p.154). An ever-changing, plural world requires a self that can embrace and let go of ideas without inner struggle. It is assumed that the proper deployment of one's potentials can bring substantial rewards, such as professional success and personal popularity. As Gergen observes, all this is possible "if one avoids looking back

[21] Pastiche refers to an artwork that is composed of many different sources.

to locate a true and enduring self, and simply acts to potential in the moment at hand" (p.150). For all of Lasch's concerns about feeling as though one is playing a role, if one pursues this kind of multiplicity, derive from belief in a real self that can be contrasted with the pastiche experience. One need not feel guilty for his or her open-ended self-construction if one's starting point is that of having no one essence to be faithful to.

The Protean Self

Like the pastiche self, this self-configuration also turns the falling apart perspective on its head. It is captured by a character in a Bharati Mukherjee novel: "Hurtling through the diaphanous mist, unable to grab hold ... yet unwilling to abandon the ride I'm on" (cited in Lifton, 1995, p.68). Whereas Biff in Millers' "Death of A Saleman" revealed his modernist identity confusion in his inability to make commitments ("I just can't take hold, ma. I just can't take hold of some kind of life"), Mukherjee's character gleefully rejects the notion of any firm commitments. Like the pastiche self, protean[22] selves emphasize the adaptibility of being able to embrace and let go of things without inner struggle.

The falling apart perspective is turned upside down by the attention this self-form gives to potentially promising cultural changes. Some of these changes, such as family reconstitution and exposure to global events, were acknowledged in preceding sections. The protean self-form also turns the pessimistic perspective over by reframing cultural losses in a positive light. It utilizes the "hidden"[23] potentials in such developments as the loss of authority. For example, Jean-Paul Sartre (cited in Lifton, 1993) wrote of how his fatherlessness enabled his autonomous self-construction. By virtue of his father's death before he was born, Sartre was free to "move from shore to shore, alone and hating those invisible begetters who bestraddle their sons all their life long". In other words, his father's absence left him free of the heavy authority of the past (p.75).

However, proteanism does not involve a comprehensive rejection of modernism. While the pastiche self is described as swimming relatively effortlessly through various cultural currents, Lifton (1993) argues that the liberatory potential of the protean self always rests on tenuous grounds. The precariousness of its liberatory potential is a result of the continuing influence of modernism on our lives. Ever dominant expectations of reliability and consistency in people conflict with postmodernist multiplicity. The precariousness also stems from an acknowledgment of the ambivalent character of postmodernism. While, rapid, ever-shifting images bring different "invitations to be", it must not be forgotten that these potentials rest on unstable conditions. The instability of the postmodern world itself promotes feelings of vulnerability and anxiety. In response to these conditions, the protean self oscillates between postmodern (pastiche-like) self-construction and experiences with modernist self-ideals. Continuing concern with consistency and coherence perform the necessary function of "grounding" the self (p.7). Such grounding is deemed necessary in order for the self to be able to experience postmodern multiplicity in a promising way. As

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[22] The term protean comes from Greek mythology. Proteus was able to change his shape (e.g., from lion to dragon) with ease. He refused to commit himself to one single form (Lifton, 1995).

[23] Modernists would experience as hidden the potentials that postmodernists readily perceive in such changes, by virtue of the cultural lens which they bring to them.

Lifton describes it, "no mere chameleon, proteanism depends on the existence of relatively established self-corners" (p.93).

However, these self-corners are created by individuals on their own personal and cultural terms. The modernist focus on enduring personal connections, for one of Lifton's (1993) subjects, is seen as a way in which she combats her struggle with postmodern formlessness. Though it is precisely her involvement with different causes that gives her fulfillment, she simultaneously confronts the despair that accompanies not having one clear focus to her work. Her sense of "'sort of wandering... not knowing anything for sure that's right, anything for sure that's wrong'" is eased by "'sticking to people'" around her and "reasserting an 'almost arbitary" set of convictions having to do with justice, fairness and a politics of participation'" (p.90).

The previously mentioned idea of the symbolizing self forms the basis for the constantly evolving protean self. Whereas the pastiche self may be seen as tactical flexibility for the present moment, the protean self takes in new information in such a way that the self's entire groundwork is transformed. The parts of one's self that are incompatible with the new components are often dropped from the self. However, such components are also often resymbolized in ways that allow it to fit with the present self-ideal. In line with modernist definitions of identity, which speak of a sense of historic continuity, the protean self demonstrates that personal history can be combined with different self-interests in the present. This process results in seemingly odd, but workable combinations in the self. For example, one of Lifton's (1993) interviewees, came to reject the fundamentalist Lutheranism of her childhood. In spite of this, she did not ultimately divest herself of its imagery. Rather, her present associations to the Crucifixion suggest a transformation of the image in a way that fits with her present concerns over human rights abuses. Whereas she previously found the imagery grotesque, she now sees it as emblematic of the torture that many people are subjected to. "A lot of people are tortured that way. They may not be on a cross, but they're tortured in some very similar ways... (p.55). In this light, the Crucifixion becomes a powerful motivator for her social activism. Thus it is the mind's symbolic activity which forges cohesion between otherwise incommensurable self-components.

Moreover, as if in direct response to Lasch, Lifton (1993) suggests that what often looks like defenses on the part of the self, should alternatively be seen as "hard-won affirmations of a self struggling to pull together its component parts (p.91). Lifton's interviewees expressed desire to act in areas where they can exert at least some influence is seen as part of the process of trying to live by activist principles, in a pluralistic world. It is difficult to decide on effective strategies when the complexity of present-day capitalism, for example, makes it difficult to determine who, if anyone, is the enemy.

Lifton (1993) does not see protean selves as seeking completion with respect to their quest for form (a difficult, if not impossible accomplishment in a pluralistic world). Rather he suggests that the notion of collage serves as a apt metaphor for the organization of meaning within the self. As in the case of the odd combination discussed above, the collage assembles disparate elements together to create unexpected meanings. Like Derrida's texts, these meanings remain forever open-ended. In this context, authenticity becomes something

that is constructed from the imaginative combinations of the artist. The notion of collage also suggests an alternative conception of self-mastery. One interviewee suggests that her role is more that of editor of pre-existing meanings as opposed to author of original works. The importance of her symbolizing activity is suggested in her description of herself as engaged in the assembling and re-arranging of her personal history.

Lifton (1993) argues that what is important for the protean self is the *process* of combining its fragments to avoid fragmentation. In the absence of pure form, constant uncertainty becomes a characteristic feature of the self. Yet, protean subjects also resist the idea of having all the answers. Their indeterminacy allows them the freedom to create themselves over and over again. This self-creation relies on their infinite capacity for symbolization.

The Narrative Self

The narrative self marks a return to a more firm conception of identity. While the protean self-form preserves only the continuity of the self, the narrative self reflects both the continuity and coherence of traditional definitions of identity. However, as in the case of the protean self, these criteria are constructed as opposed to "found". With the narrative self-form, the story is the vehicle through which people construct their identities. The story or narrative is deemed the appropriate vehicle for identity construction because our experience of ourselves resembles the goal-directed sequence of events in stories. Rather than see one's life as "discrete, endless, juxtaposed moments" (Gergen, 1993, p.204), the individual attempts to understand life events as being related in some systematic way. And because we make sense of our lives through narratives, events come to take on a storied reality. For example, events are seen as having a beginning and end. These observations suggest that identity can be seen as the rational result of a life story, as opposed to a mysterious inner entity.

The components of the self (eg., authenticity) are created via the act of narrating the self-relevant events of one's life. McAdams (1996) suggests that the postmodern multiplicity of self-interests can be experienced as meaningful when combined in a personal construction of an integrated life story. He refers to one's various self-interests as "selves". McAdams suggests that the individual's multiple selves are coordinated by the "I". The "I" is the inner structure which organizes the selves (past and present) into a coherent narrative. Identity thus becomes the "extent to which the selves can be rendered unified and purposeful by the 'I'" (McAdams, 1996, p.?). In this light, authenticity refers to the unique meaning that the individual arrives at through his of her storied integration of self-interests.

As in the case of the protean self, the individual's imagination plays an integral role in his or her self-construction. In this case, the capacity to resymbolize events is what enables the integration of disparate parts into a life story, as opposed to a collage. The metaphor of the life story also returns us to the metaphor of the author. The author of the narrative self, like the editor of the protean self, does not pretend to produce completely new and original works. However, the assembling of parts into a story implies more elaborate manipulation than that associated with editing. Moreover, collages are not bound by the

same rules of form that narratives require in order to be intelligible. While a note on fifteenth century monastery life could not intelligibly be inserted into a story of a soccer match, such images could be juxtaposed in a collage. While life stories may vary somewhat in degree of conformity to narrative form, McAdams (1996) suggests that good mental health results from well-formed[24] life stories.

The Relational Self

The relational self is a variation on the narrative self. While it maintains the idea of identity as the result of a life story, it rejects the view of self-narratives as the properties of individuals. Rather, Gergen suggests that self-narratives are more accurately seen as the products of social interchange. According to Gergen (1993), both our telling of life stories and our lived experience of them support the notion of self-narrative as the result of a "mutually coordinated and supportive relationship" (p.224).

To communicate our self-narratives, we rely on the inherently relational system of language. As Derrida's writings pointed out, language existed before the individual and owes its existence to a collectivity. Since relations precede any individual account, it can be argued that relations are more fundamental than the self. As well, since language, as a system of social interchange, implies an audience, narratives cannot be intelligible outside a relational context. Moreover, Gergen (1993) argues that self-narratives are a "linguistic implement" (p.203) used by people in relationships. From this point of view, the continuity and consistency of the self do not reflect an inner state. Rather the individual "develops the capacity for understanding himself in this manner and creditably communicating it to others" (p.220). It can be important to show how one's commitments, moral ideals and honesty have been consistent over time for the sake of relationships. As Gergen observes, "In close relationships people often wish to know that others 'are what they seem'..."(p.220). Thus contrary to modernist and narrative definitions, identity becomes more a matter of social performances than stabilized states of mind (whether constructed or found).

The notion of social performances should not be read as suggesting that ideals and emotions are just superficial "play-acting". The notion of identity as social performances importantly acts to prevent the loss of modernist traditions. As in the case of the narrative and protean self-forms, modernist traits and relationships are seen as "potentials" (Gergen, 1993, p.220), rather than true and final states of being. Gergen argues that these potentials should be construed as as "serious games" (Gergen, 1991, p.196). To understand a cultural action as a serious game is to understand it as possessing an internal validity for its participants that is limited to particular social situations. In this scheme, the realization of potentials is analogous to the situation in which one can be intensely and vigorously involved in a soccer match, but then walk away afterwards, claiming "it was only a game" (p.197).

Furthermore, identity also depends on the individual's ability to negotiate successfully with others as regards the meaning of narrative events. The story of how one surmounted obstacles to acheive success can only be maintained by securing other peoples'

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[24] Components of a well-formed narrative include an ordered arrangement of events and the establishment of a "point" (Gergen, 1993, p.204) to the story.

agreement on what counts as a obstacle. Hence the realization of one's potentials depends on the support that others give to a narrative construction. Finally, lived narratives can also be seen as the products of relationships. One cannot live a story in social isolation. In fact, there is a sense in which the meaning of our actions derive from the way that they figure in ongoing relationships. If your hand was raised above your head, one could only venture an interpretation of yourself as aggressive, with the knowledge that another person was backing away from you in fear (or some other such relation) (Gergen, 1993).

The above observations lead Gergen (1993) to suggest that the properties of the self are more accurately conceived of as properties of relationships: "what has served as individual traits, mental processes, personal characteristics can promisingly be viewed as constituents of relational forms" (p.202). This shift, from the individual to the relations between individuals, causes us to return to a more fully postmodern conception of multiplicity. The fact that the postmodern person is engaged in many relationships means that he or she is involved in the construction of multiple narratives and therefore multiple identities. Thus the relational self departs substantially from both the protean self and the narrative self. While individuals with these self-forms combine their disparate parts to acheive some coherence within the self, the individual with the relational self sustains multiple relations by telling and enacting multiple narratives. With sufficient skill in negotiating the meaning of events, the individual may even be able to use the same event in service of different narratives. For example, completion of medical school may be used to demonstrate that one has always been highly capable (the consistency narrative) as well as show that one is on his or her way to a successful professional life (the progressive narrative). In this case, the individual applies his or her capacity to resymbolize events with an eye to the meanings that others will be likely to accept.

Gergen (1991) argues that with this conception of multiplicity, the postmodern condition of competing self-interests loses its "lacerating potential" (p.157) For "if it is not individual 'I's' who create relationships, but relationships that create the sense of 'I', then 'I" cease to be the center of success or failure, the one who is evaluated well or poorly, and so on..." (p.157). Hence the reduction of individual responsibility is seen as an adaptive and liberatory development.

Commentary

As was the case with the falling apart perspective, the validity of the optimistic outlook on postmodern changes depends on the lens (modernist or postmodernist) from which you approach it. For someone looking out at the world through postmodernist glasses, the loss of coherence within the self would not provoke the concern demonstrated by writers of a modernist orientation. Rather this development could be seen as laying the groundwork for an expansion of the potentials of the self. The extent to which one is able to judge postmodern changes as adaptive and liberating then depends upon the extent to which one has adopted a postmodern consciousness.

Having noted the foregoing limitation on evaluation, there are still several observations which can be made that call into question the freewheeling depiction of the

pastiche self. The following observations also pertain to the pastiche-like qualities of the remaining "swimming not wallowing" self-forms. These observations take note of the persistence of modernist cultural traditions which act to limit the promising potential of postmodern changes. For example, as Gergen (1991) himself noted, the experience of oneself as a "strategic manipulator" (p.147) is not an uncommon response to the expansion of self-evaluative criteria that results from media saturation. Thanks to the holdover of the modernist self, people are very likely to experience their diverse actions as superficial role-playing. For such individuals, guilt free construction of the self may be a long way away. The continuing influence of modernist self-ideals amidst postmodern changes may also play a role in people feeling "meta-stable" (Rorty, 1995, p.101). According to Richard Rorty, people may feel unable to take themselves seriously because they are "always aware that the terms in which they use to describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their vocabularies, and thus of their selves" (p.101). The enduring legacy of essentialism may make for an uneasy awareness of one's socially constructed status.

However, as Lifton (1993) recognizes, experiences like meta-stability may also be attributed to the ambivalent character of postmodernism itself. The very fact of having to select between so many different possibilities leaves one with the anxiety of never knowing whether one has made the most optimal choice for the moment (Rorty, 1995). Similarily, the act of taking incoherence and inauthenticity as one's starting point can lead to a debilitating cynicism or nihilism. Cynicism is, after all, the rational response to seeing that despite "our lack of an inner self to which our actions should be true, life goes on; we continue to act" (Gergen , 1991, p.188). Lifton (1993) suggests that irony may be a panacea for such feelings. Protean persons use irony to express the dissonance between their experiences and how the world is made out to seem. In this way, ironic expressions come to serve as a buffer for the inactivity and alienation that can accompany awareness of such contradiction. However, Lifton fails to consider how easily irony can slide into something that is purely destructive. The extensive use of irony would make it difficult to experience any human projects in a satisfying way. Moreover, serious cultural concerns like apartheid can be demeaned by allowing all uses of language to be territory for ironic play. Furthermore, the irony used by some individuals in the culture hardly acts as a buffer for painful feelings. Rather the "dark and heavy" (p.112) irony coming from Anderson's (1995b) "postmodern nihilists" (p.112) serve only as a means of expressing their "alienation, hedonism, ridicule and contempt for mainstream society" (p.112). The modernist legacy of concern with the "truth" can be recognized in such people who "see that there are many conflicting beliefs in the world, and conclude that, since these can't possibly *all* be true, they must be all be phoney" (p.112).[25]

Similarily, the experience of endless substitutions of meaning itself may not be very liberating. Not only is having to rest in one spot, however temporarily, anxiety-provoking, but the act of constantly embracing and discarding meanings may be experienced as

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[25] Anderson (1995b) suggests that the new nihilism is heard most clearly in punk rock subcultures: "You can hear it in songs that shout defiance at the conventional pieties and embrace the pleasures or pains of the moment -which are in their way , at least trustworthy" (p.112).

wearying (Anderson, 1995b). Once again, being accustomed to modernist unitary meaning may inform this perception of ever-shifting meanings. However, it is also possible that anyone, irregardless of the extent of their postmodern consciousness, would experience this as wearying.

People may also experience the endless substitutions of meaning as creating a more superficial sense of self (Taylor, cited in McAdams, 1996). At first glance, this evaluation looks like one whose validity hinges on its being seen through a modernist lens which values depth. As Gergen (1991) notes, terms such as style, surface, and superficiality cease to have explanatory import in a world that has dissolved the distinction between truth and image. However, this evalution is made intelligible in a different way by the fact that none of the multitude of options being made available may be experienced as self-fulfilling. Gergen argues that each of these options add to an ever expanding repertoire of means for self-fulfillment. However, as Taylor observes, nothing could count as self-fulfillment in a context where everything counts as self-fulfillment. For something to be experienced as fulfilling we normally require that there be something else in the culture which does not count as fulfilling (e.g., things we do out of a sense of obligation). It is only by comparing the latter options with the former, that we come to experience the former as being fulfilling.

Moreover, as Lasch (1984) observes choices without lasting consequences are also unlikely to be experienced as satisfying. Unless lasting consequences are attached to options, the options will be experienced as interchangeable. As Lasch put it, "Unless the idea of choice carries with it the possibility of making a difference, of changing the course of events, of setting in motion a chain of events that may prove irreversible, it negates the freedom it claims to uphold. Freedom comes down to the freedom to choose between Brand X and Brand Y" (p.38). Of course, the act of constantly embracing and discarding meanings makes it difficult to experience these options as having any lasting consequences. What these observations suggest is that pastiche-like multiplicity fails to adequately accomodate our needs as meaning-hungry (i.e., symbolizing) creatures. Because we are not selves in the same way that we are organisms (Taylor, cited in Lifton, 1993), options fail to count as fulfilling unless they can be set apart from others in a meaningful way.

The extent of the optimism of the "swimming, not wallowing" perspective is also called into question by problems with how multiplicity has been formulated as a viable self-experience. Either the accounts of multiplicity in these works are insufficiently explained or else significant barriers stand in the way of their realization. Insufficient explanations for self-multiplicity are found in accounts of the pastiche self and narrative self. With respect to the pastiche self, we are not told how the individual is to decide between his or her multiple self-interests. Gergen's (1991) omission of how self-interests are to be prioritized in this self-form could be attributed to the fact that he sees this form as a stage that one passes through en route to the more viable (from his perspective) relational self. Although the organization of self-interests is sufficiently explained in McAdams' (1996) account of the narrative self, we are not told the origins of this organizational scheme. That is, we are not told where the "I" who organizes the selves resides within the individual.

Moreover, although McAdams' account adequately addresses how one's multiple parts may co-exist, it fails to explain why the narrative self-form retains the modernist self-object distinction. McAdams (1996) recognition that individuals experience themselves as embodied actors as opposed to merely textual does not qualify as a sufficient response to this omission. For as Lyotard and others observed, the fact that people experience themselves in this way is the problem. That is, their experience of themselves as embodied actors is a reflection of their successful indoctrination into the illusion of the independent, autonomous actor. Thus it would be inappropriate to advocate the narrative self-form as a model of viable multiplicity, as it would perpetuate the harmful deceit of the modernist self. While the self-object distinction captures the lived experience of many, it perpetuates a distorted view of our capacity for agency and continues the subjugation of different potentials, many of which we remain unaware of because our indoctrination has been so complete.

Moreover, McAdams' views on constructing coherence and authenticity may not be appropriate for all. Black author, Stuart Hall (cited in McRobbie, 1994) has written of how being fragmented *feels* most authentic to him. And Gergen (1993) questions whether it may just be common practise to speak as though people have one life story. He notes how writer Joyce Carol Oates admitted to finding it impossible to deliver a single, coherent narrative that described her development as an author. Instead she found herself creating several stories: "'Each angle of vision, each voice, yields...a separate writer self, an alternative Joyce Carol Oates'"(Oates, cited in Gergen, p.31).

In contrast to the narrative self, the protean self's shifts into a pastiche-like multiplicity allow for a much more permeable and therefore less harmful boundary between self and environment. The protean self also avoids the aforementioned pitfalls of the narrative self by allowing for much looser conceptions of coherence, authenticity and agency. These looser conceptions are conveyed in the metaphors of collage and editor. The notion of collage allows for more freedom with respect to the range of meanings which can be constructed. It also allows for more freedom with respect to how they are to be formed (i.e., the organization of the self-interests). This freedom however is appropriately qualified by an acknowledgement of the pre-existing social meanings that the self works with in exercising its agency. This acknowledgment is suggested by the metaphor of the editor.

However, here is where we encounter the significant barriers that were spoken of earlier. Lifton (1993) himself acknowledges that the ability to successfully oscillate between modernism and postmodernism hinges on the possession of emotional resources[26]. For example, he notes that one of his subjects' ability to construe his feelings of homelessness in a positive light depended on having a solid relationship with his mother. To access the promising potential in postmodern changes, one is required to have had experiences in

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[26] A certain level of intellectual sophistication may also be needed. Lifton's subjects appear unusual in the extent to which they engage in highly creative acts of re-symbolization. Many are well-travelled, university-educated individuals who are deeply involved with social justice issues. Although Lifton takes pains to show how protean tendencies are demonstrated by groups other than this elite, his writings nevertheless convey that such individuals have been able to utilize the positives in postmodernism more successfully than others.

micro-settings that provide one with a sense of basic trust. Typically it is experiences with modernist traditions such as committed relationships that produce the feelings of trust, security and grounding needed to combat the vulnerability that postmodern changes also inspire. However, even with these resources in place, the protean self can still be observed to walk the fine line between liberation and disintegration. Several of Lifton's subjects admitted to experiencing frequent bouts of depression and anxiety related to their chronically tenuous sense of self.

The protean self's reliance on psychological resources is of particular concern because the culture shows no signs of decelerating the loss of the very experiences that make these resources possible. As mentioned previously, it is modernist experiences, particularly those involving stable and reliable relationships that facilitate the development of the sense of trust and security needed to negotiate postmodernism. Although Giddens (1991) argues that relationships such as marriage and family become not so much lost as transformed by postmodern changes, it should also be noted that such transformations are marked by their having been formed as a reaction to loss. As such, the recombinant family may not be experienced as fulfilling all of the same functions as the traditional family. Nor would there be any guarantee of their fulfilling these functions in the same or similar ways as the relationship that they have come to replace.

This transformation in relationships also bears on the viability of the relational self form. Like the protean self-form, this self-form adequately addresses the self-object distinction through its situating of identity in the relations between people. This relational conception of identity also allows a more qualified view of agency, one that recognizes the individual's essential dependence on others. However, a problem arises with the motive that is seen as driving the relational self. Individuals are said to be motivated to construct self-narratives because they serve to maintain relationships. Although social relationships are fundamental to the individual's existence, one may still wonder about the extent to which people feel motivated to maintain them, in view of the kinds of transformations that are underway. Gergen (1993) suggests that individuals will be more motivated than ever to maintain relationships due to the increasing social interdependence fostered by media and communication technologies. Such technologies allow for new communities to form wherever communication links can be made. The fact that such "symbolic" (Gergen, 1991, p.213) communities hasten the deterioration of the traditional community matters little: "When loving support is squeezed from telephone impulses, fascination is fired by 'on-line' computer mates, ecstasy is procured for the price of an air ticket, and continuous entertainment is generated by the mere flick of a TV remote, who needs the tedious responsibility of a next-door neighbor?" (p.215)

However, what Gergen misses is that the more voluntary character of the new communities may cause them to be experienced differently from the ones which they replace. While relations formed over the Internet are as capable of providing support as a family member, the fact that they are easier to dissolve may mean that this support could be experienced as less satisfying than that which comes within a more enduring relationship. Thus so long as face-to face relationships endure, there is the possibility that other new communities will be experienced as inferior.

Lifton (1993) and MacAdams (1994) could argue that this argument is weakened by the individual's infinite capacity to resymbolize the new communities. However, both these authors fail to take note of the cultural factors which constrain people's symbolizations in practise. Although theoretically a potentially infinite number of life stories is possible, in practise the culture and material conditions constrain the kinds of story forms that people can engage with. We would greet with suspicion a life story in which every positive event was followed by a negative event and vice versa. In contrast, we can readily accept an account that depicts one's life as a "long struggle upward" (Gergen, 1993, p.212). Moreover, as even Sartre recognized, despite the vast power of the human imagination, a waiter is still unlikely to become President. It is also true that people's experience of identity is frequently one of less conscious activity than that involved in narrating (Polkinghorne, 1996) or even editing.

These particular limitations do not apply to the relational self. In fact they are readily acknowleged in Gergen's (1993) account. Because of the shift in location of identity to the relations between people, they do not pose a threat to the promising potentials that Gergen claims for this self-form. From this perspective, the limits on narrative form are important because they tell what others would be likely to perceive as plausible story-forms. The more an individuals's narrative conforms with these constraints, the more likely his or her account will acheive the end of maintaining relationships.

However, there is another way in which the optimism claimed for the relational self-form may be challenged. Layton's (1995) observations, from the previous section, challenge Gergen's idea of how modernist self-ideals can be preserved as "potentials" rather than true entities. Gergen (1991) suggests that we should understand modernist traditions as though they were serious games. However, if as Layton points out, our fragments (i.e., self-interests) are reified in certain ways, then one cannot easily slip in and out of cultural practises. As Lasch (1984) rather acerbically puts it, "in real life, as opposed to pluralist fantasy, every moral and cultural choice of any consequence rules out a whole series of other choices" (p.38).We cannot enter and leave marriages as we enter and leave soccer matchs. It is not possible to actually enter into a lifelong commitment, all the while acknowledging its contingency. Thus this example suggests that there may be limits on the extent to which modernist ideals can be meaningfully maintained as self "potentials".

However, the biggest cultural barrier to the realization of the relational self has to be the lack of a widespread relational consciousness. This lack is attributed to the lack of an adequate vocabulary for expressing relatedness. As was mentioned previously, "we cannot ask whether a *relationship* hopes, fears or wishes, nor can we understand how it is that a relationship could determine Bob's feelings and Sarah's thoughts rather than vice versa" (Gergen, 1991, p.160). Gergen himself acknowledges that the development of a relational vocabulary will emerge slowly given the robust individualism of our Western vocabulary.

Yet, to prove that a widespread relational consciousness is not just some "pluralist fantasy"(Lasch, 1984, p.38), Gergen (1991) encourages us to look to Eastern cultures where, for centuries, "matters of self seem puny compared to concern for family"(p.239).

However, what Gergen misses in invoking the East as a guide is the intense stress that is often felt by individual members of an extended family. Rather than experience Gergen's idea of less performance pressure with the idea of shared responsibility, such individuals feel intense pressure over having to be responsible for the fate of their entire family. Gergen also fails to consider the countless stories of individuals who have had a less than satisfactory experience with having to subjugate their needs to those of the collective. Gergen could argue that such conflicts really reflect a failure to successfully negotiate narrative meanings so as to be able to maintain multiple relationships (i.e., those of their family and others, whom the individual's personal needs actually reflect). However, the fact that the former, individual versus collective interpretation is subscribed to by people who have not left their traditional cultures raises questions about the validity of Gergen's possible take on the subject. Such individuals could not be accused of approaching the matter from a robustly individualistic perspective.

The problem with Gergen's ideas around shared responsibility lead us to the last major problem associated with the "swimming not wallowing perspective". The problem is that of morality. In contrast to the "death of morality"[27] view implied by theories of the falling apart perspective, each of the four optimistic theories maintain different views as to how morality may be possible in a postmodern age. Yet with each view comes a different problem. The extended family example describes only one of the problems with Gergen's account of shared responsibility. Gergen provides few practical details on how people in relationships can be held jointly morally accountable. The issue of how moral principles can be held at all is insufficiently addressed by his problematic account of how modernist traditions can be maintained as self "potentials" (Gergen, 1993, p.220). Moral principles are held to be among the modernist traditions that were to be preserved in this way. Nor are we told how the sharing could actually be carried out. Gergen cites court cases in which other people besides the individual accused have been held responsible for the crime committed. The famous Tarasoff case, for example, has led therapists to be fearful of liability should they fail to protect people who may be at risk for harm from one of their patients. However, such examples fail to specify how the notion of shared responsibility in everyday life practise could be expressed. How, for example, are we to guard against the diffusion of responsibility? Social psychologists have observed that the more people there are to witness an emergency situation, the less likely any one person will be to arrange for help. The responsibility for doing so becomes diffused amongst the crowd. This finding suggests that some scheme is needed to prevent individuals from relinquishing their share of the responsibility to other individuals or the group as a whole.

Although McAdams (1996) fails to discuss morality directly, it can be inferred that individuals commit moral actions when the actions reflect the ethics of their life stories. Bauman (1994) proposes a way of making morality conceivable in such a situation. In fact,

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[27] The theories of the falling apart perspective are unanimous in their implied views on morality. They imply that postmodernism makes morality difficult, if not impossible. This is because postmodern changes diminish the individual's capacity for agency. From the modernist perspective, morality derives from the intentions of the individual actor. If there is no individual agent, there can be no morality.

he argues that this situation may result in demonstrations of more committed morality than ever before. These demonstrations are attributed to individuals having to personally deliberate over alternatives in the process of establishing their own ethics. Bauman sees the expenditure of time, energy and intellectual resources on the part of individuals as creating substantial motivation for them to abide by what they have established.

While Bauman sufficiently addresses moral motivation, his proposal leaves unaddressed the possibility of morality under conditions of relativism. Acting according to the dictates of one's own self-narrative can be compared to acting only in accordance with one's own cultural standards. The latter view, known as cultural relativism, arose from the field of anthropology. Cultural anthropologists observed that it was inappropriate to judge a culture by another culture's standards. The absence of universal standards implies that no culture can be understood except from within its own terms. This means that any action can be judged moral so long as it complies with the moral standards of the culture within which it is performed. The problem with this conception is that it precludes any discussion of values. From this perspective, all cultures are seen as equally valid. Thus "any attempt to win someone to your own point of view, or even to expose him to a point of view different from your own becomes an intolerable interference..." (Lasch, 1984, p.36). Hence the situation of cultural relativism, which could easily be applied to self-narratives (simply substitute one word for the other), renders the notion of moral agent meaningless. Though a potential to be committed to priniciples may remain, such commitments cannot really be called moral. Morality it would appear hinges on the existence of universal, transcendent standards.

However, Berlin (1995) suggests an alternative. He argues that the existence of multiple perpectives from which a matter may be approached need not need spell the death of morality. Contrary to cultural relativism, there is a way for members of different cultures to understand one another's values and ideals. This understanding ultimately relies on the human capacity for symbolization. The capacity for symbolization enables members of different cultures to comprehend each another's ways of life through the "force of imaginative insight" (p.52). Even though culturally different peoples might find each other's values unacceptable, "if they open their minds sufficiently they can grasp how one might be a full human being, with who one could communicate, and at the same time live in the light of values widely different from one's own, but which nevertheless one can see to be values, ends of life, by the realization of which men could be fulfilled" (p.52). The fact that all cultures are capable of such understanding implies that their must be some values that we hold in common as human beings. Although we may not agree on what constitutes the good, we can understand, at least, that others are, like ourselves, concerned with the construct. Thus the fact that there may be no universal moral principles does not preclude discussion of values. On account of the common humanity on which Berlins' proposal of cultural ***pluralism*** rests, we are free to criticise the values of others. Contrary to cultural relativism, these values are not simply subjective.

When it comes to life stories, Berlins'(1995) views also apply. He shows us how it is possible for us to each live by the terms of our different life stories and still be considered ethical agents. Moreover, the notion of life stories, as opposed to cultures, makes discussion

of morality even easier. The fact that stories must follow certain rules in order to be intelligible to others makes understanding others' moral points of view easier. Others' values must proceed from narratives in the same way that their own do.

Although Berlin's (1995) notion of pluralism allows for morality to be conceivable in a postmodern age, it does not make resolving ethical conflicts any easier. Nor does the capacity for morality remain connected to particular types of action, which could qualify as moral. Recall that in Kohlberg's (1984) modernist theory, the capacity for acting morally unfolded in the individual over time. This innate unfolding yielded moral actions, as defined by their reflection of universal standards (e.g., law and order). In contrast, the person with the narrative self is a moral agent by virtue of his or her symbolizing capacity. While this ability too is innate, symbolizing makes one ethical regardless of the moral orientation reflected in his or her choices. Selves are fundamentally ethical in that, as symbolizers, we are always engaged in questioning and formulating what is the "good" (Taylor, cited in Lifton, 1993). Thus although we may be able to preserve morality in postmodern times, we do so with even less assurance about what the "good" looks like, in others' actions as well as our own. And when we do come to some conclusions about what is ethical, we may hold these for shorter periods of time, thanks to our constant symbolic activity.

The above observations also apply to the protean self. In fact, Lifton invokes Taylor's observations to explain how individuals with the protean self can be moral agents. The fact that moral behavior is no longer attached to a specific moral orientation is reflected in the constant "ebb and flow" that characterizes this self. While individuals with the protean self engage in some commitments as part of their modernist "grounding", the commitments are never totally firm. However, Lifton holds out hope for more solid commitments from the protean self for the future. Many of his interviewees reflect what he calls a "species consciousness" (Lifton, 1993, p.227) in the commitments they form. Their actions reflect a concern for others' welfare, both locally and internationally, that is guided by a recognition of our interdependence as a species. However, Lifton's hope may be overly optimistic as many of his subjects came from an elite of highly educated individuals, many of them with backgrounds in social justice work.

The last but certainly not least of the morality problems associated with the "swimming not wallowing" perspective comes from the pastiche self. Individuals with this self-form lack the motivation to do anything which does not advance their self interests. Acting to one's potential in the moment gives rise to a form of narcissism not morality.

Growing Up Postmodern

The theories reviewed in this chapter are not specifically about youth, even though writers such as Lifton (1993) and McAdams (1996) suggest that what they observe is most apparent in the young adult age group. As noted in chapter one, young people spend more time with (and have spent less time without) media and technologies than any other age group. One could venture that young people may be more able to access the promising potentials of postmodern changes, having grown up with the flickering images of MTV. They may also be, depending on how old they are, accustomed to the experience of new

communities and lack of authority. However, the promise of greater agency that such experiences appear to hold out for youth may also be undercut by their economic disenfranchisment. Developmental factors, such as that of the imaginary audience, may also act to compound the pressures of reflexive self-construction. Such possibilities are explored in the next chapter. In it, I examine how the various academic theories of identity may be playing out in young people's real life experiences. However, I pay particular attention to the theories reviewed in this chapter. As the reader shall soon see, they appear to be the most useful for making sense of the representations and activities of young people that are sampled in this study.

Chapter Four **Bought and Sold**

I think the unspoken agreement between us as a culture is that we're not supposed to consider the commercialized memories in our head as real, that real life consists of time spent away from TVs, magazines and theaters. But soon the planet will be entirely populated by people who have only known a world with TVs and computers. When this point arrives, will we still continue with pre-TV notions of identity?

Douglas Coupland, Polaroids from the Dead

In this chapter, I explore select representations of youth as well as "identity products"[1]. The visual and literary media were selected on the basis of the attention they have received for being works that comment on the experiences of young people in the 1990's. They include works of both mainstream and non-mainstream media. The particular examples of "identity products" were similarly selected for being fairly distinct products of 1990's youth culture / subcultures.

I chose to analyze media depictions for a few reasons. One reason was to simply explore the practical insights that could be gleaned from non-academic discourses. Another reason was to take account of the insight of postmodernists like Derrida, who emphasize that what people have to report about their experiences is, in effect, "written in advance as scripts made available by [the] dominant culture" (MacRobbie, 1994, p.180). Much of young people's experiences are a product of the way that cultural discourses such as music, magazines and television position their young audience in a "particular relationship to the text and its meaning and in doing so play a concerted role in constructing and organizing subjectivity" (p.180). In fact, cultural studies advocates have gone as far as suggesting that media representations of young people "offer a frame of reference that may replace traditional frameworks" (Wyn & White, 1997, p.20).

In the following section, I explore the changes that can be observed in popular representations of youth. In the second section, I look at indicators in the texts and consumer activities of self experiences of the falling apart variety. In the third section, I explore manifestations of the more hopeful theories of the "swimming, not wallowing" perspective.

Threats, Victims and Symbols

Wyn and White (1997) suggest that popular depictions of youth can be grouped into the three categories of threats, victims and symbols. However, they note that shifts have occured in the ways that youth are portrayed as either problems or symbols of society.

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[1] According to Côté and Allahar, young people purchase fashion, music and leisure products as a means of identity formation.

Beginning in the 1950's [2], young people were portrayed in popular depictions as "threats and inherently bad, and at the same time, as the focus of hope and optimism and intrinsically good but vulnerable"(Bessant, cited in Wyn & White, p.18). The rationale informing these disparate depictions was that young people were naturally like animals. They could be tamed by social conventions and thus made respectable. The authors suggest that these discourses both drew upon and fuelled the developmental psychological theories that were emerging at the time. As noted in chapter one, these theories assumed that young people needed to pass through a series of developmental stages. Part of this process involved defying the conventions of society in order to arrive at one's own freely chosen values and beliefs (Marcia, 1980). Adolescence was felt to be naturally a time of struggle through which one emerged an adult, provided he or she successfully completed normative tasks like identity formation (Erikson, 1968).

The positioning function of representations can be seen to have been at work in the fact that indigenous, ethnic minority and working class youth were the ones that were predominantly depicted as posing a threat to the values of a supposed "majority" (Wyn & White, 1997, p.19). Such youth were depicted as posing a threat through their style of dress, violent behavior and / or deviant attitudes. This popular conception encouraged a "moral panic" about the disruptive behavior of youth despite the fact that only a very slight percentage of these teens or the youth population as a whole constituted actual threats. Moreover, such youth could also be depicted as being "at -risk" of becoming delinquents. The idea that certain young people (those "at-risk") are unlike a majority of young people who are "on-target" (p.22) coincided with the development of institutions charged with the surveillance and treatment of young people. In contrast, the developmental psychological perspective figured in a positive way in the significance that middle class youth came to have as a symbol of the "post-war, virile and self-determined" (p.19) economies of the industrialized world. These youth were more likely to be portrayed as successfully making the transition from youth to a stable adulthood.

In my review of current popular depictions, I found myself agreeing with Wyn and White's (1997) categories. And like them my sense of these three categories departs in some significant ways from the understanding that these terms would have had in the past. However, I also saw some continuities with the aforementioned meanings of these categories, particularly with respect to the depictions of youth as problems. For example, one of the most acclaimed youth films of the 1990's continued to perpetrate the image of young people, again largely working class and ethnic minority, as threats and victims, "at risk" for violence, drug dependence, and moral degeneracy. The film Kids depicts Telly, a fifteen year old "virgin surgeon" on his crusade to "deflower" as many adolescent girls as possible (Clark, 1995) [All of the adolescent males were brutal and hypersexed. The females were all "burbling, pushover morons" (Males, 1996, p.273)]. One girl learns that she has become infected with HIV through her first and only sexual encounter with Telly. During

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[2] Young people came to be a focus of popular media in the 1950's, as working class young men acquired greater leisure time and more buying power (Wyn & White, 1997). Wyn and White state that "later post-1950's popular conceptions of youth reveal a continuity with these early discourses" (p.19), though they do not suggest a definite date when their influence could be seen to be waning.

her quest to find him in hopes of preventing further infections, she is seen as taking whatever pills are made available to her in the course of a night. Her quest fails because she is too stoned to get to him on time. Kids , purportedly one of the most realistic youth portrayls of the 1990's, tells us that such reckless promiscuity and rampant drug taking among teens is typical, especially among those from the inner city (Clark, 1995). However, as those who deal with real kids pointed out the film was little more than an adult fantasy of adolescent risk taking (Males, 1996). It failed to speak to the realities of poverty, sexual abuse, rape, and AIDS inflicted upon young people by older adults. It would seem that films like Kids may have had an effect on its subjects' parents generation. Surveys of a broad cross-section of American adults reveal that they believe teenage behaviors to be much worse that objective measures show them to be (Males, 1996). The impact on teens of such films is, ironically, more questionable given the oft-received theatre rating of NC-17 which prohibits their viewing. The three youth in their early to late twenties with whom I viewed the film all expressed disgust at the filmmaker's obvious intent to scare baby boomers about their children.

The rationale behind such depictions may have changed slightly. Although there is no longer the need to establish levels of surveillance of youth, there has been an expansion of youth services that is in constant need of consumers. This is especially true in the United States where private mental institutions advertise by showing families at the gravesites of teens who presumably failed to get the help they needed (Males, 1996). In the less mainstream depictions explored in the following sections, two young women in two separate representations complain of their parents having put them in such facilities, following apparently trivial trangressions of their parents rules.

Interestingly, one does not encounter support for the rationale behind increased social control of youth that is advanced by Côté and Allahar (1994). In fact, quite the opposite appears to be the case. As noted in chapter two, Côté and Allahar contend that increased monitoring of youth takes place in educational institutions to ensure that young people do not rebel as a consequence of their consciousness of their subordinate status. However, just a few years ago, popular films appeared to take up the issue of a "youth underclass" or "lost generation" or "generation X". The film Reality Bites is about a young women who despite being valedictorian of her university class, finds herself working for a fast food outlet (Stiller, 1994). Singles is another such film that focuses on "grungy" twenty-something underacheivers instead of the expected ultra fashionable and successful youth of most TV and films (Crowe, 1994).

For myself and apparently other young people, as well, these representations are far from being supportive. Rather than perceiving these representations to be supportive of young people through exposing how they are disadvantaged, they are felt to be exploitive. They are seen as products of attempts to co-opt young people's actual experiences and creations for the purposes of selling them back to them[3] in a commodified form. In fact, this situation has left some youth feeling that there can be no youth culture: the zealous efforts of industry have left "no moment of freedom and chaos when a counterculture can take root" (Ferguson, 1994, p.62). As one young man, interviewed by the press observed, "its like

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[3] and older and younger people too

we've been robbed of culture" (cited in Ferguson, p.62). It seems likely that this view may be commonly shared among North American youth. Many youth were affected by what happened to the "grunge" scene of Seattle. Its fashion and music were stolen, only to be repackaged for sale in large department store chains. Kurt Cobain's suicide note was filled with the worry that he was "faking it", "it" being his rebellion which the commercial music industry ate up.

These popular forms are also felt to be watered-down, so as not to be disruptive of consumer capitalism. It is, after all, hard to take the idea of a disenfranchised generation seriously when it is used as the background for a predictable Hollywood romance / comedy. A comparison with how independent films treat this subject also renders support for this idea. For example, the independent film Clerks (Smith, 1994) addresses the same subject matter as Reality Bites (Stiller, 1994), but with a strongly anti-consumerism message, absent in more popular depictions.

According to popular depictions, young people in the 1990's remain associated with the future society. However, it appears that the way in which they are symbolic of society has changed significantly over time. This is not surprising given the conditions of uncertainty and scarcity around which the transition to adulthood must now take place. As Wyn and White (1997) point out, in accord with these changes, young people in the 1990's are very rarely depicted as being in the process of reaching maturity. These authors propose that "coming of age" (p.21) has been supplanted by youth as the "outcome" (p.20) of the "use of new forms of consumption" (p.20). These forms of consumption revolve chiefly around the body. They include the moisturizing creams and exercise machines that enable youth to perfect their physical selves, while enabling older people to look young. The new symbolism implies that no one need "grow up" regardless of their actual age. Consuming the right goods allows the more desirable process of "becoming" (p.21) to go on endlessly.

Anyone who watches television has most certainly been exposed to the association that is drawn between consumer products (from Oil of Olay to Toyata 4-Runners) and being young or youthful. Moreover, depictions of young people in popular TV shows (e.g. Friends ,Beverly Hills 90210), fail to show them as being engaged with either traditional rites of passage nor more informal "markers" (Elkind, 1984) like getting a first job. If such experiences are documented, they are rarely depicted as carrying with them the connotation of becoming an adult. In fact, young people in these programs appear to inhabit what could be described as youth "ghettoes". If they work (many are students), they are seen as being concentrated in youthful industries like entertainment or fashion, perfect vehicles for advertising aimed at youth. They are also seen as having little contact with older adults, their interactions with one another resembling closely that of the high school clique. Thus the new way in which youth figure as symbols of society may be seen as fitting both with the reality of fewer coming of age experiences as well as the work of retailers in constructing "youth".

Falling Not Swimming

It is clear from the above discussion that while popular depictions can provide some insight into actual youth experience, their value cannot be assessed simply from their surface content. In contrast, the present and following sections consist of material from less mainstream media[4] which I perceive as being more straightforward reflections of young people's real life experiences. I do not mean to suggest that just because these representations are more marginal that they must have more access to the truth about how most young people actually think and feel and why[5]. Rather, my decision to regard these works in this way was informed by the fact that they are less likely to be affected by the same kind of profit-motive that drives popular culture producers to try to appeal to the widest possible audience, above all. The creators of low budget, independently produced films or alternative press publications are less likely to feel constrained by market imperatives and the need to protect dominant cultural interests. On the other hand, it can be argued that such media may be even less representative of young people, in general. One could argue that these works may be capable of representing only those young people who occupy marginal positions, in, for example, youth subcultures. However, as the foregoing observations about youth culture suggests, the division between the dominant culture and subcultures may no longer apply. Thus what has often been construed as being marginal may actually speak to a more broad cross-section of youth.

In keeping with the ideas from the last section, there is much evidence among these works of young people inhabiting a postmodern world, where self-realization, as it is traditionally understood, is put into question. The modern "reality" is frequently called into question. And as the section title implies there are many indications that the experience of such a reality for young people is characterized by loss. Characters are portrayed as struggling to cope with uncertain conditions in such works as Douglas Coupland's (1994) Life After God. Coupland's characters are "the children of the children of the pioneers" (p.273), united by their lack of religious upbringing and political faith. Early in the title story, the narrator tells us that he and his fellow grandchildren were exposed to an "earthly" (p.273) paradise through their middle class comforts and lack of ideology to constrain their enjoyment. Yet we are quickly informed of the narrator's doubts that secular consumerism is the "finest [life] to which we may aspire" (p.273). In return for paradise, these grandchildren were felt to have gained "an irony that scorched everything it touched" (p.273). Forsaking an upbringing based on doubt proves not to be easy: "I try to be sincere about life and then I turn on a TV and I see a game show and I have to throw up my hands and give up...Clarity would be so much easier if there weren't so many cheesy celebrities around" (p.287).

The discomfort that accompanies the loss of ideology is also communicated in another set of stories by the same author. In Polaroids From The Dead (Coupland, 1996), a young man is shown to give up on the idea of political participation when his experience of

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[4] Although some of these works became popularly consumed, they were not the products of the popular culture industries.

[5] The notion that those who are on the margins are capable of greater insight into the true workings of the centre has been a common fallacy among postmodernists (Bertens, 1995)

campaign work tells him that politics is really about staging media appearances. The story ends with a dream the young man has in which he revises the ending of a story that he was told as a kid. The original story is about two kids who get lost in the White House and are trying to find a way out. In his dream, however, the two kids are featured as "punching holes through walls and cutting through locks. Looking for food" (p.139). The dream kids act as a metaphor for a generation whose survival is threatened by the difficulty of penetrating through the surface of televised politics. In Eric Bogosian's (1997) film, Suburbia, a young man challenges his girlfriend's claim of having a set of political beliefs that she wants to express through her "performance art". His act of challenging quickly reveals that her "politics" are nothing but performance. Despite her protests that she cares about causes like racism and sexism, she fails to do anything when racist or sexist incidents involve her circle of friends. As her boyfriend implies, she has simply adopted a list of trendy "isms" to suit her purposes.

In addition to having no ideology, young people are also depicted as suffering from a loss of history. In Richard Linklater's film (1991) Slacker, the viewer encounters a number of characters (young and old) who are heavily "into" conspiracy theories. Early in the film, we encounter one such character, who, while discussing a UFO theory, muses about there "being a lot of people wandering around nowadays with no sense of history". The character just finishes speaking these words when the camera pans over a missing child poster. This juxtaposition of words and images can be read as suggesting that one of the reasons young people feel lost is their lack of a firm sense of history. The film implies that they lack knowledge about what the past really consisted of, thanks to the phenomenon of hyperreality. A young man comments that he is unsure whether the knowledge he has of places he has travelled came from the actual trip or viewing the place on television. Throughout the film, young people are seen as being conscious of history as something that is constructed. They are seen as discussing the need to "wipe the entire slate of American history clean" and rewrite it. This discussion as well as those engaged in by the conspiracy obsessed represent an intense distrust of what Lyotard (cited in Lemert, 1997) called metanarratives. Young people are seen as being especially distrustful of those artifacts and representations that are integral to American identity. The youth who desire the rewriting of history also desire the erasure of the Masonic pyramid from the dollar bill. Those into conspiracies are preoccupied with the Kennedy assasination and the placing of the man on the moon. Moreover, not unlike Lasch's (1984) "paranoids", they are depicted as being intensely engaged in the construction of their own theories.

The characters in Coupland's (1991) novel Generation X also reflect a distrust of authoritative sources. One of the three central characters, Dag, is driven by a desire to learn just how big a nuclear mushroom cloud really is. He is seized by the thought that he may have been duped all his life into believing that it would be much bigger than could actually be possible. His friend Claire exhibits a similar distrust when Dag tries to assure her that the Trinitite[6] that was accidently spilled across her floor is harmless. She retorts "you don't actually believe all of that *harmless* talk do you? You are *such* a victim, you pea-brained dimwit - no one believes the government" (p.77).

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[6] a new substance created by the first nuclear test

The distrust of authority also appears to extend to more local sources. In Brad Fraser's (1995) play Poor Superman, the characters express their distrust of the moral principles passed down to them by their parents. One character, for example, comes to the conclusion that cheating on one's partner is a "relative concept"(p.104). About her partner's infidelities, Shannon comments, "once I got over those suck ass morals our lying, cheating parents foisted on us - I realized his other sexual partners had nothing to do with his love for me" (p.104). Fraser shows how such moral relativism can slide into amorality. David, the protagonist who has an affair with a married man, resists being accused of wrongdoing. He implies that what he is doing is neither right nor wrong since commitment itself is a sham. David observes that the commitments people make to each other, as sincere as they are at the time of their making, are in reality meant only "for varying lengths of time"(p.168). However, his friend / accuser demonstrates how the demise of principles and institutions does not absolve one of moral responsibility. She appears to exemplify a relational ideal of morality by suggesting that the affair was wrong not because his friend's partner was married but because he had violated a promise to his wife. Her judgment was thus based not on the institution of marriage but on the agreement made between two people.

Other works, however, are more bleak. They continue the negative depiction of older adults. In Slacker, adults are represented as paranoid, schizophrenic, amoral or dead (Linklater, 1991). We are encouraged to see the confusion young people reflect as an understandable given their available role models. Like Poor Superman, Slacker also connects young people's apparent lack of morality to the influence of adults (Linklater, 1991). In one scene, an on-duty security guard plays pinball while joking with an ex-con. In the next scene, the security guard accosts a young women for shoplifting, while a passer-by remarks, "I know her. She was in my ethics class". These scenes communicate the hypocrisy of "adult" morality along with the ineffectiveness of forms of transmitting values.

Young people are also portrayed as resentful of their parents generation for the damaged state of affairs (i.e., environmental, social) that were bestowed on them. In Generation X, Dag commits minor acts of vandalism on cars that carry bumper stickers like "We're spending our children's inheiritance" (Coupland, 1991, p.5). He admits that he is envious of their having lived lives free of feelings of "futurelessness" (p.86). And he is furious at their "blithely handing over the world to us like so much skid-marked underwear" (p.86). Dag's " boomer envy" (p.21) also concerns the material wealth and security accrued by older members of the baby boom generation, by virtue of "being born at the right time in history"(p.21). When he quits his marketing job, he tells his boss, "You'd last about ten minutes if you were my age these days... And I have to endure pinheads like you rusting above me for the rest of my life, always grabbing the best piece of cake first and then putting a barbed-wire fence around the rest. You really make me sick" (p.21).

When adults are portrayed in a more positive light, it is because they are seen to act as "tranquillizers in an otherwise slightly-out-of-control world" (Coupland, 1991, p.112). This recalls Lasch's (1984) idea that people dare not think of the past, lest they suffer a debilitating nostalgia for its security and certainty. These adults are the ones that appear stuck in a previous era. They allow the characters in Generation X to indulge their fantasies of living in a more predictable time (Coupland, 1991).

The loss of family and other intimate connections can be added to the losses of ideology, history, morality and security. In the second scene of Slacker a young man runs over his mother with her station wagon (Linklater, 1991). Another stops speaking to his family after they stop sending him money. In both Slacker and Suburbia (Bogosian,1997), parents are the enemies who stick their children in youth mental institutions. In Generation X, most of the protagonist's family fails to come home for Christmas (Coupland, 1991). According to Andy, his siblings all stopped trying to act like the image of the "perfect" family, immortalized in a portrait of them taken years ago. This was not experienced in a liberating way. His siblings simply gave up on the idea of a fulfilling family life. The power of the image of the family or hyperreal family also appears to inform the young man's shooting of his mother in Slacker. Following her murder, he watches what looks like evidence of an ideal childhood: a home movie of his mother teaching him to ride a bike (Linklater, 1991). His complete lack of emotional reaction recalls Lasch's (1984) explanation of narcissism as deriving from a confusion of the self with images. This understanding of narcissism is also reflected in Atom Egoyan's (1992) film, Speaking Parts. Lisa, a voracious consumer of media images, is seen to lose control over her attempt at filmmaking. She is thrown out of the wedding that she has been hired to record when she upsets the bride by asking her questions that she would have asked of herself. Her failure to realize the inappropriateness of her intimate questions stems from her inability to see her object as anything but an extension of herself.

The music of the "grunge" youth subculture also reflected the foregoing experience of family, especially those affected by divorce and remarriage. It also reflected resentment of "the boomers and all the false expectations they saddled [youth] with" (Ferguson, 1994, p.60). Grunge bears a heavy resemblance to its predecessor, punk. Although both punk and grunge condemn a society that gives youth no hope or propects for change, punk had a clear enemy: politicians and people in power. In contrast with this and in accord with postmodernism, grunge seems more confused: "It's as if kids don't know who to blame: their parents, the media, the schools - or themselves" (p.61). And this confusion is not just about media indoctrination. It is about doubting the right to despair. As Kurt Cobain (cited in Ferguson) acknowledged, "I'm a product of a spoiled America. Think of how much different my family life could be if I grew up in a depression or something. There are so many worse things than a divorce. I've just been brooding and bellyaching about something I couldn't have, which is a family, a solid family unit, for too long" (p.61). Coupland's (1994) tentative questioning of the consumer paradise he enjoyed as a middle-class, North American youth suggests the same worry about seeming spoiled if one complains about the paucity of such a life. When you have material comforts, freedom from ideology and still greater opportunities than any place else on the world, what do you have to complain about? Hal Niedzviecki (1998) attributes this sentiment to an "inherent desire for self-knowledge: knowledge of life not as a series of product choices, but as the one shared absolute that compels us to understand and express our dissatisfaction despite the fact that we have everything we need and should probably just shut our mouths and 'be happy'"(p.26).

Accordingly, all of the evidence for a postmodern society, whose experience is characterized by loss, is seen to influence the questions that characters raise of themselves. In Polaroids from the Dead, a character asks the narrator, "what it means to be real"

(Coupland, 1996, p.80). The narrator considers this question to be "extraordinary"(p.81). Unable to reply, he muses mentally over the meaning of "real" (p.81) and of "how real *is* real" (p.81), in a world dominated by images. In Poor Superman, David is seen as questioning the idea of an essential self. He asks his friend, a transsexual going through reassignment, if it is possible (Fraser, 1995, p.31) or even "right" (p.32) to change who you "really"(p.31) are. Sharon responds affirmatively, observing that her surgery is proof of that. However, David suggests that his idea of wanting to change his self is different: "you're changing the outer you to match the inner you. Think we can do it the other way around?" (p.31) Ironically, David implies that changing one's sex, a materially, "essential" part of oneself, may be easier to change than what we think of as our inner personality. In Life After God, one character asks another, "What is *you*, Scout? What is the *you* of *you*? ...This *you* thing - is it an invisible silk woven from your memories? Is it a spirit? Is it electric? What exactly *is* it?" (Coupland, 1994, p.305) Despite this questioning, the power of the experience of an essential self appears to remain strong. Prior to this questioning, the same character informs us that he "thinks of how hard it is to reach that spot inside us that remains pure that we never manage to touch but which we know exists"(p.304).

The challenge of staying in touch with something authentic about one's self is a recurrent theme. Dag, from Generation X, was at one point, a living example of the idea of a "strategic manipulator" (Gergen, 1991, p.147). By day, he would work in marketing and feel thrilled about being part of the most desirable target market in the Western world. But come night, he'd "go nuts!": "I'd streak my hair and drink beer brewed in Kenya. I'd wear bow ties and listen to alternative rock and slum in the arty part of town" (Coupland, 1991, p.19). However, he could not keep the dual lifestyle up. The realization that he was an "imposter"(p.27) in both scenes drove him into a "mid-twenties breakdown" (p.27). In Slacker, a young man is criticized for his apparently pastiche-like personality. A young woman points to his chest and accuses him of having nothing real "in there" (Linklater, 1991). She wonders about whether there is anything more to him than the "bits and pieces" he pulls together from his "authoritative" sources. Another young man toys with the idea of sticking his index finger in a fan after being told that his fingerprints are unique. He rejects "uniqueness" as something that he has "seen too much evidence against". The answer that Coupland (1996) provides for the question that begins this chapter ["will we still continue with pre-TV notions of identity?" (p.112)] is "Probably not. Time continues on: Instead of buying blue Chairman Mao outfits, we shop at the Gap. Same thing. Everybody travels everywhere. 'Place' is a joke." (p.112)

Authenticity gets reduced to "moments". In Generation X, Andy takes note of how in the brief moments we are captured in by cameras, "our poses are accepted as honest" (Coupland, 1991, p.17). In Slacker, a history graduate student makes a short film of his ideas for his thesis, ideas considered too radical by his commitee (Linklater, 1991). The film concludes with his raising a gun to the camera while noting his preference for a "short, uncomplicated life". Better to live a short, though "real" life than a lengthy one of compromise.

The idea of authenticity as limited to short intervals is also reflected in zine production. Zines are "noncommercial, nonprofessional, small circulation magazines which

their creators produce, publish and distribute by themselves "(Duncombe, 1997, p.6). Most often (but not entirely) the creators are young people. The subjects examined are far-ranging. While there are no rules to their production, a common thread running through many is the importance of spontaneity for capturing something "real". By offering "the spontaneous disgorge of whatever is on the creator's mind"(p.32), zines are felt to cut through "TV horseshit reality"[7](Upright, cited in Duncombe, p.32) to get to more personal truths. As Stephen Duncombe (1997) elaborates, "saying whatever's on your mind, unbeholden to corporate sponsors, puritan censors, or professional standards of argument and design, being yourself and expressing your real thoughts and real feelings - these are what zinesters consider authentic"[8] (p.33).

However, the downside to this aspect of zines is that meaning sometimes get sacrificed. Some zines go so far is their celebration of unfettered, authentic expression that they can be literally unreadable. The act of expression is emphasized over the result. As the publishers of Sick Teen note, "a punkzine laid out neat and tidy is like a punk show with reserved seating. Complaining about not being able to read them is like asking the band to stop playing so that you can hear what lyrics the vocalist is singing... That is not what punk is about. Not tidy layouts, not slow and carefully enunciated lyrics"(cited in Duncombe, 1997, p.33). While the intent of the zine's creators is honorable, the fact that they feel reduced to being nonsensical in order to be "real" is a sad comment on society. It is a comment that is, unfortunately, perfectly understandable given the dwindling possibilities that the culture allows for rebellion.

Furthermore, it seems unlikely that zine creators do not care very much how their zine is received by others, despite their insistence that they are satisfied purely by being able to express themselves without compromising their individuality. This notion is unlikely in light of Gergen's observations of the relational quality of identity: we need others to agree upon the meaning of our acts, even if that meaning is meaningless (i.e., pure expression). Moreover, if pure expression was all that really mattered, why distribute a zine instead of writing a personal diary?

Being required to create artifice also poses a serious problem for characters. Dag in Generation X describes his stint at marketing as being about "feeding the poop back to diners fast enough to make them think they're still getting real food. Its not creation, really, but theft and *no one* ever feels good about stealing"(Coupland, 1991, p.27). In Speaking Parts, Lance, a young actor, is seen to lose his moral centre when he fails to defend a writer's autobiographical story against his director's "adjustments"(Egoyan, 1982). At the end of the film, Lance ends his complicity with artifice by disturbing the film's shooting. This act functions to prevent the author's suicide and in the process, restores Lance's "self". He regains his ability to feel his own and others' feelings.

We are told that authenticity is so important because the lack of it results in damage to relationships and the sense that one is capable of them. The scorching irony that is gained

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[7] The TV world of spin and pseudo-events.

[8] The reader may have noticed that I used the same understanding to defend my priveleging of less mainstream material, earlier in this section

by youth in Life After God is a case in point (Coupland, 1994). The inability to speak sincerely about their feelings, to even hold onto such feelings, causes characters to worry that they have become "*past* love"(p.334). While straightforward and sincere confessions are a rarity, they are seen as necessary for people to make sense of their experience. The inability to escape from "ironic hell" (p.287) means that the problem that the narrator and his friends suffer from is unlikely to be shared. It is certainly unlikely to be articulated by anyone else since the language does not appear to exist for it: "lost means you had faith or something to begin with and the middle class never really had any of that. So we can never be lost. And you tell me, Scout...What exactly is it we end up being then - instead of being lost?" (p.305) The experience of not being lost is that of realizing that one's innocence was lost long ago, or as the narrator puts it, "coming to grips with what I know the world is truly like" (p.310). It is about being surprised by the longing for "non-things" (e.g., belief, faith, close family life) they never had.

Characters also see their predisposition to irony as standing in the way of necessary efforts to construct meaning. In Generation X, Claire insists that she and her friends cannot continue to live life "as a succession of isolated little cool moments" (Coupland, 1991, p.8). They agree that they must find a way to make these moments fit together, "or else there's just no way to get through [our lives]" (p.8). For the alternative to such attempts at meaning-making is negative identity. Negative identity is about constructing an identity based on opposition to the rest of society (Erikson, 1968). Although basing one's identity on ironic criticism can be a lot of fun, it is never wholly satisfying or sustainable. In Kevin Smith's (1994) film Clerks, two young store clerks offer a steady stream of wise cracks about their products and customers. However, at one point, one of them asks, "Well, if we're so smart, how come we're both working here? "In Suburbia, Soos challenges the negative identity that prevents her boyfriend from making a commitment to anything beyond a single night class on the history of Nicaragua (Bogosian, 1997). Her boyfriend spends most of his time at the corner of a convenience store, making acute, ironic observations of their town, Burnfield. After he exposes a problem in every course of action she suggests for him, Soos exposes the fragility of his identity: "What if you had no Burnfield to bitch about?" If Soos' boyfriend were to move out of the town he hates or if the two guys in clerks were to leave their crappy jobs, none of them would have any identity to speak of. For the paradox of negative identity is that who you are remains contingent on what you are rebelling against (Duncombe,1997). Your strategy for authentic identity remains tied to the inauthentic culture you are trying to escape. Thus, unfortunately, the joke is on you.

Also in line with the falling apart perspective is the experience of options as being both anxiety-provoking and wearying. Contrary to what one might expect given the discussion in chapter three, this anxiety is a product of the *seriousness* of the consequences that accompany today's options. In Suburbia, Soos' boyfriend, at first, refuses her suggestion that he follow her to New York (Bogosian, 1997). However, he changes his mind after inventing an understanding that enables him to combat his lifelong fear of making the "wrong" choices. He rationalizes the reversal of his decision by concluding that "everything is okay as long as I don't think about the consequences". In Polaroids from the Dead, Caroline changes from being an extremely uptight young woman to one that is exceedingly carefree. Her former uptightness is connected to her assessment of life as "so serious. One

screw up and you're doomed" (Coupland, 1996, p.22). Caroline's perspective is not out of line in the age of AIDS and specialized careers. However, neither is her radical shift in behavior. Her boyfriend attributes this change to her feeling "exhausted by the future, by options. Exhausted by risk."(p.22) Her weariness from trying to calculate the most prudent moves causes her to abandon these efforts altogether.

Thus it is not hard to see how the risky climate would encourage the obsessive desire for control that marks many of these characters. Rather than escape from the world, many obsessively embrace its ways. In Generation X, Andy's brother, Tyler, spends a lot of time buying new clothes and moussing and spraying his hair (Coupland, 1991). He is concerned with projecting the right image on his resume. However, he confides to Andy that he would "give all this up in a flash if someone had an even remotely plausible alternative" (p.150).

The main characters in this novel express their desire for control over their lives, in a different way, by going to live in the Mojave desert (Coupland, 1991). Their escape from society strategy recalls Lasch's (1984) minimal self. The desert serves as a retreat from their former lives of hypocritical jobs, superficial relationships and mindless pursuit of consumer goods. It enables them to begin the process of "de-complicating" their lives. They attempt to sever the rule that consumerism has come to have over them. Claire tells Andy's dogs that "you wouldn't want to worry yourself with so many things. And do you know why?... Because all of those objects would only mutiny and slap you in the face. They'd only remind you that all you 're doing with your life is collecting objects"(Coupland, 1991, p.11). They reject the pastiche self idea of shopping as a means of self-construction: "shopping is not creating" (p.31). And they try to stop the "commercialized memories" (Coupland, 1996, p.112) (those gained from media images) from permanently settling into their brains. If they could just confront themselves and others as though they were in a power failure, they may be able to read the "letter" (Coupland, 1991, p.38) that resides within them. The letter, an image from Rainer Maria Rilke's poetry, is a metaphor for the self. What remains true and pure about us can only be accessed by standing quietly and apart from the rest of the world.

The "straight" actions of young people like Tyler suggest that not all such behavior reflects the mindless consumerism of those in possession of an empty self (Cushman, 1990). However, other representations reflect other ways in which young people attempt to soothe such feelings of emptiness. In Suburbia, the characters get drunk (Bogosian, 1997). The feelings of emptiness that they attempt to assauge appear to do both with the inability to secure a satisfying role in production, as well as the destruction of a traditional "web of meaning" (Cushman, 1990, p.605). One character is unable to pursue a personally meaningful livelihood because he has been taught that a career should be about more than a pay cheque. He tried the army because it was billed as "not a job but an adventure". And he rejects the only other two choices that he can think of for himself, rock star or quarterback, for their next to impossible odds. This character therefore reflects Côté and Allahar's (1994) ideas about the influence of the media on young people's career aspirations. On the other hand, another component of Soos' boyfriend's paralysis is his knowledge that he does not have anything original to contribute. He knows that everything that can be said or done has,

as Derrida (cited in Sampson, 1985) pointed out, already come before. Images have robbed everything of their meaning.

Thus Côté and Allahar's (1994) emphasis on the lack of meaningful, productive roles appears to be part of the problem behind young people's inability to commit to careers. Or put another way, their emphasis on productive roles is one reason behind "slacking". "Slack" refers to a lifestyle of perpetual leisure (Duncombe, 1997). Slackers reflect the difficulty of doing anything when there is nothing worthwhile to do. As Andrew Kopkind (cited in Giroux, 1996) observes, "Life is more and more like a lottery - is a lottery-with nothing but the luck of the draw determining whether you get a recording contract, get your screenplay produced, or get a job with your M.B.A. Slacking is thus a rational response to casino capitalism, the randomization of success, and the utter arbitrariness of power. If no talent is still enough, why bother to hone your skills? If it is impossible to find a good job, why not slack out and enjoy life?" (p.72)

However, slacking is not just a default position for youth unable to crack into the professions. It can also reflect a rejection of society. While working in service is to be rejected for being exploitative and dead-end, the professions are not that much more appealing. Slackers feel daunted by the reality of long hours, corporate commitment, fierce competition and little security (Duncombe, 1997). And like the "beats" youth subculture of the 1950's, slackers are acutely sensitive to the lack of actual use-value (Goodman, 1960) surrounding much available work. In fact, Paul Goodman's observation of the situation for 1950's youth appears to be just as relevant if not more so for youth in the 1990's: "For in the great interlocking system of corporations people live not by attending to the job, but by status, role playing, and tenure, and they work to maximize profits, prestige or votes regardless of utility or even public disutility" (p.xii). The effects of this situation may be experienced more strongly by nineties youth, as the few jobs that the beats felt able to live with appear to be surrounded by even greater hypocrisy than appears to have been the case in the fifties. As one young zine writer observed, even "temp" work fails to be free of inauthentic "corporatespeak" (cited in Duncombe, 1997) about things like customer service. Thus many young people are left with the feeling that there is no nonalienating labor to preserve. Hence, another writer comments that one of the most annoying things a customer can do is to take his workplace "seriously". Like many other slackers, he has become most irritated by the "hypocrisy of not having that work recognized as being meaningless and demeaning"(p.78).

1990's youth would also seem to be more affected by what Goodman observed, on account of the impossibility today of figuring out the exact effects of your role as a producer/server (or consumer, for that matter). In the era of mega-mergers and global monopolies, it is impossible to keep track of the relationship between your role in the production process and effects that may be felt across the globe. In Polaroids from the Dead, Caroline asks Mario whether he ever thinks about "this weird global McNugget culture we live in? All our ideas and objects and activities being made of fake materials ground up and reshaped into precisely measurable units entered into some rich guy's software spreadsheet program?" (Coupland, 1996, p.23) Caroline worries about the way things seem to disappear from our culture like "deformed" (p.22) strawberries and babies. Flawless fruit and children

are just a few of the effects of the overly complex consumer society, in which all of us participate, but no one can keep track of to figure out how we have arrived in our present state of affairs. This situation leaves Caroline and Mario to muse about just how much of who they are is a product of this complex commodification process. They recognize that their attendance at a "Grateful Dead" concert follows a marketing campaign aimed at selling the culture of the sixties to today's youth: "Look at us. Long hair, but it's squeaky clean. Bare feet, sure, but your dad's "Prelude" is waiting for us outside. It's so hypocritical"(p.23). They conclude that they are the "McDead" (p.23), an expression that captures the very same feelings that prompted the main characters in Generation X to move to the desert.

Goodman concluded that the conditions affecting 1950's youth made it impossible to "grow up". The less mainstream texts support this conclusion for 1990's youth, though they do so in a different way than popular representations. In Generation X, Andy's mother sees him and his peers as looking "so beaten, so old now - so prematurely middle-aged"(Coupland, 1991, p.138) Ironically, they look old before their time, because they are exhausted and jaded by the inability to attain maturity.

However, these works may be especially concerned with the hardships of growing up simply because pathos makes for more interesting narratives. Moreover, it should also be pointed out that both zines and slackers hint that something more positive may be in the making for youth. A zine, after all, is a product that subverts the idea of mass consumption. The young people who make zines do so not for profit, but to express their personal "authentic" thoughts. In this way, zines come to serve as a vehicle for the construction of authentic identity. As Duncombe (1997) observes, "zine writer use their zines as a means to assemble the different bits and pieces of their lives and interests into a formula that they believe represents *who they really are*" (p.37). They can be seen as reflecting the odd combinations (Lifton, 1995, p.50) of protean selves. As the author of Cancer writes: "Animal rights and music and art...are all great interests of *mine*. The reason that I publish Cancer is to provide an outlet in which I can express those interests...If key chains and sperm interested me, I would probably do a publication on those things" (cited in Duncombe, p.37). Another zine, Sweet Jesus, which appears to be put together by a group of complex and diverse high school students, turns about to be an entirely fictional creation from the mind of one young woman. In an interview with the creator, Duncombe learns that all of the characters in Sweet Jesus were a part of her: "different memories, different experiences, different facets. In Sweet Jesus she created a densely populated world out of herself"(p.39).

Moreover, zine writers encourage other young people to go out and produce their own zines. They give advice about self-publishing and make pleas for emulation in their editorials: "I hope you like this little rag and start your own. I don't think there could be too many fanzines" (Jane, cited in Duncombe, 1997, p.124). In these ways, zines act to break down the division between producer and consumer. Cultural studies advocates suggest that such forms be taken seriously in the postmodern world of the visual image. In this world, "culture is dominant" (McRobbie, 1994, p.?) instead of production. Angela McRobbie, for example, suggests that young people's creations, in fashion and music, represent a strong

preference for the cultural sphere that should not be ignored. Such activities can lead to "the creation of a whole way of life, an alternative to higher education (though often a 'foundation' for art school), [and] a job creation scheme for the culture industries" (p.161). She notes that this involvement can be especially empowering for those youth unlikely to qualify for university and the professions.

Slacking can also be valued for being an expression of agency at the level of everyday practices. Despite its basis in rejection of the dominant culture, it is not just an expression of negative identity. In addition to the meanings of slacking already mentioned, there is also its signficance as an alternative lifestyle. Slackers promote such adaptive ideas as doing "more" with less material things and redefining "success" in more personal terms (Duncombe, 1997). It is about appreciating experiences that get lost in high speed society, like having a "small child start a converation with [you]in a Dairy Queen"(Coupland, 1994, p.254). The next section is concerned with evidence of other similarly hopeful strategies for youth people.

Not Drowning But Waving

The different readings that can be taken of zines and slacking reflect what one commentator has called "not drowning but waving" (Stanley, 1997. p.36). These words are an inversion of a lyric from a Stevie Smith poem. By inverting the words, and therefore the sentiment of the original, Chris Stanley sought to describe an "exploration in the possibility of affirmation in circumstances which conspire against the affirmative" (p.36). This statement captures the nature of the evidence that is presented in this section.

In line with ideas about moving to the cultural sphere is a kind of art, that is increasingly being produced by young people. This art (which includes but is not limited to zines) is about making the consumer perceive the extent to which his or her own identities and choices are determined by advertising. For example, Germaine Koh's postcards are photographs that she finds in other peoples garbage. They serve to remind us of how our experiences are invariably reduced to product (cited in Niedzviecki, 1998). The American Fine Arts Gallery in New York harbors an exhibit which turns the gallery into a Gap store, with "pseudo-fashion shoot glossies" (cited in Niedzviecki, p.25) of youth dressed up in Gap outfits and an analysis of the typical garbage found in your average Gap outlet.

Yet such work is not being limited to display in the art world. Rather it can be seen to be moving into concerts and readings and street performances "that break through the isolation and apathy of passersby" (Niedzviecki, 1998, p.C1). In fact, Hal Niedzviecki notes that this art may serve as the basis for a viable nineties youth counterculture. By subverting the images of consumer culture, young participants in a recent conference in Toronto felt that they were building a "homemade radical culture" (p.C1): "its all about resisting corporate power and creating your own space" (p. C1). Far from capitulating to feelings of being shut out by the political process, these youth see their own creativity and art as being an effective medium for expressing their dissent. It is their use of creative symbolization *a la* Lifton's protean self that saves the irony of these "culture jammers" (p.C4) from degenerating into debilitating expressions of negative identity: "the twenty-something

organizers handed out colour-coded press passes with 'suggested questions' like "What kind of spin can I put on this conference to maximize the sales of my commercial sponsors' products?" (p.C4).

Similarly, the most promising moments in Slacker are the ones in which young people seize control over the technologies that normally constrain them (Linklater, 1991). In one scene, a young man appears in an room that is surrounded by television sets. He has invented a game called "Video Virus" thorough which he can insert himself onto any of the screens and perform a limited set of actions. When asked for the rationale behind it, he explains, "Well, we all know the psychic powers of the televised image. But we need to capitalize on it and make it work for us instead of working for it". This theme is also taken up in the scene with the history graduate student. When he shoots the camera that he is using to film himself, he indicates an awareness of both the power of the image and one's ability to control it. Similarly, in the last and clearly most joyful scene, a group of young people drive up a big hill in order to throw a camera into a canyon. The viewer feels their sense of release as the camera gets tossed off, and the images that are recorded by it move into a colorful swirl, before fading to black. One is left with a strong sense of young people's ability to defy outside categorization, through taking control of their own representations.

It must be noted, however, that the above interpretations of Slacker are highly personal. This is necessarily the case as its non-narrative form depends upon the viewer's active involvement in constructing its meanings. Slacker follows a succession of young people, none of whom are connected to each other except in providing the pretext for the introduction of the next character (Linklater, 1991). It is through the juxtaposition of shots, which comment on each other by virtue of their subject matter, that the viewer is led to infer their significance. Likewise, the cut and paste, collage style of zines encourages the viewer to break the stance of the passive audience and "co-construct" its message. The form of these works thus also recalls Lifton's emphasis on the capacity for symbolization as the basis for protean selves.

Likewise, the young viewer in Speaking Parts reflects Lifton's idea that authenticity may be constructed through the creative use of this capacity (Egoyan, 1992). In Speaking Parts, a young woman ritualistically watches the bit parts of an actor that she is infatuated with. However, near the end of the film, she sees things in the films that she has never seen before. These new parts mark her shift from the role of passive viewer to that of active interpreter. The images no longer contain her desires so much as give expression to them. As Egoyan (1993) observes, "a *true* surface can be developed if the viewer breaks through the impassive nature of the screen identification process with a degree of involvement" (p.28). In other words, the act of consuming media need not be limited to the taking in of that which is superficial, artifical and alien to the self. Rather by bringing one's own meaning-making process to the product, it may be possible to take away something more "real".

Forms of 1990's youth fashion and music also represent a blurring between producer and consumer. In the previous section, concern with fashion implied Cushman's (1990) lifestyle solution or some variant thereof. Young people, like Andy's brother in Generation X, embraced the latest styles, for lack of any other "remotely plausible

alternative" (Coupland, 1991, p.150). However, the phenomenon of retro fashion challenges this view of young people's consumption. It restores the young person to being a "discerning 'politician' of everyday purchases" rather than a "cultural dupe" (witting or unwitting) of advertising and lifestyle (McRobbie, 1994, p.27). In other words, such fashion is evidence of the fact that young people do not buy passively or uncritically. As the example of Andy's brother even supports, they can be seen as always transforming the meaning of bought goods.

However, this transformation of meanings occurs in a much different way than the protean or narrative self-configurations would suggest. There appears to be two ways in which retro fashions have emerged among young people. They may revive the entire look of a period, as in the case of Neo-Hippies or Neo-Punks. Alternatively, they may sample and mix creatively from any number of periods and styles. This process is facillitated by the sheer proliferation of options available to us in postmodernity. As Ted Polhemus (1997) observes, "We now inhabit a Supermarket of Style where, like tins of soup lined up on endless shelves, we can choose between more than fifty different styletribes" (p.150). Both manifestations of retro signal a shift in the meaning of youth style. Instead of being born out of particular historical circumstances, the revivalist "cannot help but reside in a sort of streetstyle theme park where true authenticity will always be an impossible dream" (p.149).

Yet the lack of authenticity does not concern them. Rather the abstraction of symbols from their historical objects allows one to appreciate history on a different level. The importance of history shifts from knowing the truth about the past to playing with it, for the purpose of creating something aesthetic. Those who mix and match from different looks delight in the incongruity and endless possibilities: "an Armani suit worn with back to front baseball cap and 'old school' trainers, a 'Perfecto' black leather jacket worn with tartan flares, a Hippy caftan worn with rubber leggings, DMs and a Chanel handbag" (Polhemus, 1997, p.150). And those who pursue a "neo" look play with being an "anarchic Punk, bohemian beatnik or bad ass Raggamuffin. If only for a day"(p.150). Thus 1990's youth fashion may not be about pursuing mass trends or asserting group identity, as with the old subcultural styles. With retro, your clothes reflect your surface experimentation, not your commitment to a set of a values.

In accord with the death of the self, meaning and authenticity, youth retro fashion celebrates the "truth of falsehood, the authenticity of simulation, the meaningfulness of gibberish" (Polhemus, 1997, p.150). Redhead? (199?) similarly takes note of the the shift from meaning to "spectacle". He observes that young people "simulate the simulation of the media" (p.?). Rather than emulating the looks of celebrities, out of admiration for what they represent, young people seek to become models, just like *all* the people they see on TV.

"Sampled" music is another example of young people's transformation of the meaning of bought goods. Like retro fashion, it signals the creation of something "new" from pre-existing artifacts. What is sampled is bits and pieces from recorded music, noises and spoken word. Such sounds are lifted electronically from its sources and combined with an electronic drum pattern. This form of music production is integral to a wide variety of dance music (e.g, house, techno, jungle). Sampling technology allows a disc jockey to create

"original"music for just that moment, music which cannot be replicated and distributed by major record companies. Just as the meanings associated with retro become discarded when revisited in the present, so do the meanings of sampled sounds get lost in the process of layering them to create new audio effects. Samples of Martin Luther's King's "Let freedom ring!", may be layered upon other sounds and an accelerating beat to create an intensifying effect for dancers. Or the monotone voice of someone reading from Binswanger and Boss[9] may be combined with crashing waves and dolphin calls, to help calm clubbers down. Once again it is the spectacle that is appreciated and not any new, "odd combination" (Lifton, 1993, p.50) through which meaning can be derived.

Sampled music and retro fashion suggest that young people are capable of an affirmative, even joyful experience of postmodern conditions. However, despite their "swimming, even wallowing", it is still not clear what their experience of *identity* is like. If sampling and retro mark a new age of culture and aesthetics, then what meaning remains for identity in an age that denies meaning? This brings us to another youth activity that functions as a dominant site for both sampling and retro. The "rave" is a dance party involving hundreds to thousands of youth. They are held, sometimes legally and sometimes illegally, in old warehouses or open fields, most typically for the duration of one full night. A rave involves several different "rooms" for dancing or "chilling out"[10]. It remembles a carnival with a variety of mediated and live entertainment besides the disc jockey, who uses sampling to construct its music. The sensory experience of the rave is like "walking into one big, extravagant psychedelic experience" (Redhead, 1993, p.90).

However, despite its similarities with sixties' unity, community and psychedelia, ravers are far from being identical to hippies. Raves are about acheiving "peace, love, and unity" for a night, not a lifetime. The music and drugs are tied to an embrace of the increasing powers of computerised technology. However, this faith in the future is about transcending human experience in a different way than was desired by youth of the sixties. Rave can be thought of as a sort of "dry run or acclimitization phase for virtual reality..adapting our nervous systems, bringing our perceptual and sensorial apparatus up to speed, evolving us towards the post-human subjectivity that digital technology requires and engenders" (Reynolds, 1997, p.108). Far from being about changing one's reality, rave is about escaping it. As McRobbie (1994) observes, "it is as though young ravers simply cannot bear the burden of the responsibility they are being expected to carry. There are so many dangers (drugs, cigarettes, alcohol, unprotected sex, sexual violence and rape, ecological disaster), so many social and political issues that have a direct bearing on their lives and so many demands made on them (to be fully responsible in their sexual activity, to become good citizens, to find a job and earn a living, to find a partner and have a family in a world where marriage has become a 'temporary contract') that rave turns away from this headlong into a culture of avoidance and almost pure abandonment" (p.172). The escape from reality includes an escape from the self that derives from it.: "Dancing for eight hours to the constant beats of techno produces a collective symbiosis, what we call a vibe, that allows ravers to spiritually melt into each other"(cited in McLaren, 1998, p.D2).

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[9] existential philosophers

[10] coming down from the effects of drugs

The escape from reality and self makes for a far more enjoyable response to the circumstances that conspire against growing up than slacking. It is significant that so much of the imagery and accoutrements of rave are about childhood. They wear "kiddy' clothes, put their hair in pig tails, and suck soothers, all of which has been interpreted as a refusal to "grow up" (McRobbie, 1994), in the same way that slack is about "rejecting society before it rejects you" (Linklater, cited in Duncombe, 1998, p.88). Raving resembles slacking on this one dimension of "inactive" resistance. However, it goes even further in its rejection. It can be argued that rave poses a threat to the "symbolic order" by negating its rationale. By escaping the whole scene of identity, you refuse ideas of rationality, individuality, and nine-to-five work in an office.

Yet raves fail to provide any direct assistance to youth as to how to get by in everyday life, a function that was fulfilled in traditional youth subcultures and in the alternative values proposed by slackers. Simon Reynolds (1997) criticizes it for being a weekender lifestyle in which disappointment is inevitable. Despite the euphoria that dancing on Ecstacy[11] inspires, without a true object to the event, "there can result a disenchanting sense of futility: all that energy and idealism mobilized to no end" (p.106). Thus though raves are valuable for giving expression and temporary fulfillment to young people's longing for escape, they may not be, in the words of Reynolds, "enough" (p.110): "Even bliss can get boring" (p.106).

If raves are not enough, if they cannot deliver a viable "post-human subjectivity" (whatever that would mean), then perhaps varieties of the narrative or relational self might prove useful. However, the value of these self-forms may depend on the extent to which youth are impacted by the "instantaneous" time of the image, (that rules over raves, retro and sampling), versus the more familiar "linear"time. In Life After God, a character explains how linear time underlies the notion of a narrative self-understanding (Coupland, 1994). Brent says that "our curse ... is that we are trapped in [linear] time- our curse is that we are forced to interpret life as a sequence of events- a story- and that when we can't figure out what our particular story is we feel lost somehow" (Coupland, p.223). In contrast, those who occupy "instantaneous" time would be accustomed to being bombarded with incongruous images. Information flows effortlessly between their multiple "windows": they think nothing of simultaneously playing videogames, watching TV and talking on cell phones. Such youth might not be compelled to connect events in a linear, meaningful way.

However, in Generation X, the main characters decide that the *story* will enable their "isolated little cool moments" (Coupland, 1992, p.8) to fit together : "We know that this is why the three of us left our lives behind us and came to the desert-to tell stories and to make our own lives worthwhile tales in the process" (p.8). As this quote suggests, it is not just story making but storytelling, the relational aspect, that is important here. However, these characters are not relational selves in the same way that Gergen (1991) conceived. Instead of constructing their stories in ways that will allow them to maintain relationship, they tell their stories in the hopes that it will help others become more self-accepting. This rationale was acquired by Andy at an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting. An old man sitting next to him advised, "Never be afraid to cough up a bit of diseased lung for the

[11] the drug of choice for ravers

spectators...How are people going to help themselves if they can't grab onto a fragment of your own horror? People want that fragment, they *need* it. That little piece of lung makes their own fragments less scary" (Coupland, 1991, p.14). Just like the creator of Sweet Jesus, Andy, Dag and Claire exchange fictional stories about fictional characters, that in reality, reflect something about themselves. The only rule that governs their sharing is that "at the end, we're not allowed to criticize" (p.14). Their process of storytelling enables them to get past their protective irony and feel secure with one another. It provides support for one's self-construction.

Despite the not unsurprising lack of evidence for a relational self as Gergen conceives of it, relationships are integral to self-construction in a different way. The end of many of these works is marked by a kind of "relational salvation". In Generation X, Andy is "redeemed" after being embraced by a group of mentally disabled teenagers. The embrace occurs after he stops his car because he sees a mushroom cloud forming. As Andy looks up at the sky, a white egret grazes his head and he falls to his knees. Within seconds, this group of teens surrounds him in a tight embrace. When their chaperone comes to pull them away, Andy thinks "how could I explain, that this discomfort, no this pain, I was experiencing was no problem at all, that in fact this crush of love was unlike anything I had ever known" (Coupland, 1991, p.179). It is implied that through this pure, human connection with others, Andy receives the gift of being able to live on, instead of burn with the nuclear cloud. In Speaking Parts, Lance and Lisa shed their narcissistic selves, after each of them ends their passive relationship to media. The last scene features the two of them in a silent embrace, by which it is proposed that "it is the physical contact between two human beings that will transform the role of the image and generate another space within which different questions of identity can be worked out"(Burnett, 1993, p.22). In the final scene of Slacker, the joy of creativity and resisting categorization is an unspoken, collective one.

What these works seem to be suggesting is exactly what Henrik Ibsen (cited in Young, 1992) was suggesting in his 1867 play, Peer Gynt. In expressing his anguish over the emptiness at the core of his multi-layered "Onion self" (p.144) , he refers to Solveig, the woman he first loved and who has waited for his return for fifty years: "One who remembered - and one who could wait" (p.144). As Neil Young observes, "the reconstruction of the deconstructed self, Ibsen advises, is through compassionate, abiding and deeply rooted relationships with others" (p.144). Thus even though raves are not "enough" (Reynolds, 1997, p.110), their ideals of empathy, unity and community are not that far off. What is needed to soothe the pains of postmodernity may be a relational conception of the self, which cultivates these values of "faithfulness, hopefulness and lovingness" (Young, 1992, p.144).

There are some limitations of this analysis which prevent its conclusions from being as strong as they otherwise could have been. To yield more trustworthy and substantial conclusions, it would be necessary to increase the amount and variety of media used. The media that was sampled for this study is limited by being mostly concerned with the experience of white, middle-class, males. Making the sample more representative of a general youth population would allow readers to feel more confident that the findings were not just about one particular group of young people, thus increasing the likelihood of their

being meaningfully applied to other youth. To make the media sample more representative of young people as a whole, it should be expanded to include works by and about young women, as well as youth from ethnic minority and working class backgrounds.

The next step that would be required to strengthen one's confidence in the conclusions reached here would be test them out amongst real live young people. As a first step in that direction, I asked a few friends for their reactions to some of these ideas. Both Eric[12] and Ashley could relate to the yearning for a more predictable time in which to live. Ashley, aged 27, observed that she feels compelled to consume things like lava lamps because they recall the security of her mother's era. Similarly, Eric, aged 32, admitted that he wishes he could have been part of the sixties, "when people didn't have to worry about things like recycling". On the other hand, Daniel, aged 19, appeared to experience the lack of a blueprint for becoming an adult as liberating. He commented that he enjoyed moving between different "scenes" of people and jumping in and out of different interests. In fact, he railed against the idea of pinning anyone down to a particular set of interests or attitudes: "Why shouldn't kids from the middle-class suburbs act like rappers, if they want to?" It seemed that neither Daniel nor Ashley felt that the interests they expressed at any given time reflected their true selves. Rather in line with Gergen's notion of the pastiche self, these interests were just surface characteristics to be played with. The comments from these few individuals suggest that it may be possible to gather solid empirical evidence for how young people's lived experience may resemble the falling apart and swimming not wallowing perspectives.

[12] The respondents names have been changed to ensure the confidentiality of their responses.

Chapter Five — Translating and Recycling

One of the things that has happened to us in the twentieth century...as a human race is to learn how certainty crumbles in your hand. We cannot any longer have a fixed view of anything...[but] our lives teach us who we are.

Salman Rushdie[1]

The above quotation seems to capture the influence of postmodern changes on the self. In contrast to the developmental-psychological theories, which speak of realizing a firm identity through commitments to work and relationships, postmodern theories tell us that the ways to acheive identity, and even the concept itself is put into question. Instead of following familiar paths to an acheived state of mind, the absence of a clearly defined state and pathway cause us to try to figure out who we are: by trying to read the "letter" inside of us, figuring out why we buy the products that we do, inventing conspiracy theories and stories, or even refusing to have our creations make sense. Our lives may be about trying to protect what little remnant of a modernist self persists. Or it may be about maximizing the benefits from the plurality of options made available to us.

Rushdie describes postmodern people as being "translated men" (cited in Lifton, 1993). Our actions are cast into a new culture and language, giving familiar events a different twist. He points out that it is only from one perspective (the falling apart one) that there is the sense that "something always gets lost in translation" (p.73). Though perhaps less realized, he notes that "something can also be gained" (p.73). What can be gained is the creation of new interpretations, as suggested by the "swimming not wallowing" perspective.

Implications for Youth Workers

The crumbling certainty that marks the experience of the self carries with it implications for the work that teachers and counsellors do with young people. At the level of understanding youth, this text suggests that it is no longer possible to automatically assume that a failure to secure commitments is a reflection of identity confusion, as it is traditionally conceived. Rather the continual oscillation between alternatives may be a legitimate and even adaptive response to postmodern conditions, one that is not tied to a particular age range or short-term moratorium. On the surface, youth marked by the falling apart perspective share the experiences of meaninglessness and powerlessness of modernist, alienated youth. However, as mentioned previously, these experiences cannot be captured by the positions of victim or rebel with respect to society. Instead of suffering from a failure of the environment to accomodate them, these youth suffer from the environment being overly accomodating, constantly ready with new products and images with which to construct oneself, over and over again. Young people may not be "naturally" egocentric or narcissistic, when their social environment begs them to fill their empty selves. They fear the increasing merger of their selves with the environment, a situation more aptly described as

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[1] from a chapter epigraph in W.J. Weatherby's (1990) book, Salman Rushdie: Sentenced to Death

fragmentation than alienation. In fact, alienation would be experienced by these youth as a desirable alternative, for at least with alienation, you are able to preserve a sense of yourself as distinct from the environment. You are, at least, secure that that there is a "you" in "you".

On the other hand, there are those postmodern youth who respond positively to the dissolution of the modernist self. They demonstrate the potential to creatively construct themselves by using the tools of their "oppressors" in combination with their active symbolizing capacity. Their lives demonstrate that it is no longer reasonable or productive to see people as being wholly rebels or victims, the culture being too complex for that. However, in spite of this, (or perhaps because of it), there are possibilities for affirmation that may even extend to "post-identity" experiences, as suggested by raves, retro and sampling.

Moreover, teachers and counsellors need also guard against assuming that the only problems that youth experience with respect to entering the workforce lie in having too many options to decide from. They would do well to take note of the lack of non-service roles available, the phenomenon of "credentialism" and the isolating quality of specialized careers. It is also important for those who provide vocational guidance to take account of young peoples' perceived inability to contribute anything original or useful in either non-professional or professional roles, as well as their potential for satisfying involvements in cultural production. Thus the shifts away from cultural alienation and traditional understanding of youth opportunities mean that youth workers can no longer, as Rushdie indicates, be certain of anything. Even the act of probing the young person for the meanings that they assign to choices and actions is unlikely to provide a single, straightforward understanding. But as the forms of multiple selves (e.g., protean, narrative, relational) suggest such an understanding may not be undesirable. Though challenging and complex, these kinds of self forms may hold out hope and promise.

Part of the problem that teachers and counsellors might encounter in understanding postmodern youth may also come from the lack of adequate language to describe their experience. Although fragmentation may be a more apt descriptor that alienation, it still does not really capture its object. Neither does the experience of "not being lost", as one of Coupland's (1994) characters put it. Just like the term, postmodernism, the words that are available to us to communicate our selves may be vague and possibly misleading.

Another communication difficulty may result from young people's use of irony. Depending on how much the teacher or counsellor is immersed in modernism, the import of much of what young people say through irony may be missed, or even worse construed as being "smart-ass". In Generation X, Andy observes that his parents are not interested in how retailers are exploiting them; they "take shopping at face value" (Coupland, 1991, p.?). As a result, it would be impossible for him to truly communicate what he is doing in the desert, as this would require his parents being able to grasp the incongruity between how the world is projected to be and how it really is (the precondition for irony). This difficulty cannot be easily rectified in the same way that some counsellors propose to get "past" the cultural differences of their clients, by simply asking the client about the different world from which they proceed. This strategy may fail on account of the distrust that postmodern youth have

of adults. They may assume that your lack of understanding is a reflection of the fact that you are benefitting from them. That is, you are too close to your salary or position as someone who "treats" youth to let go of your role as the "expert" guidance person. Even if they see you as just an innocent though unaware person, they may be reluctant to explain things to you, because they are aware that you could not have experienced the same things that they are going through and therefore cannot be of much use.

The uncertainty of postmodernism requires the youth worker to shift his or her role from *expert* to *facillitator* of the constant *negotiation* rather than *acheivement* of identity. He or she must necessarily become a humble student of what young people have to teach about how to get along in the new social environment. The facilliator should validate experiences of loss and confusion while at the same time seek to maximize the potentials that postmodernity could offer the young person. In the counselling context, this could occur by helping the young person reframe or resymbolize memories or parts of themselves so that they could be experienced in a more satisfying way. Story-making or collage production could serve as useful metaphors for self-construction. Support can be offered for unconventional means of identity formation that take place in the cultural realm. Vocational counselling should be done in a context that recognizes the new challenges and opportunities that young people confront rather than simply rehashing the same old formula to "success": go to university. Moreover given the social etiology of young people's identity problems, and especially in view of the hypocrisy they experience from adults, the role of the youth worker must move beyond the office or classroom to social advocacy. This advocacy goes beyond just "youth" issues like youth unemployment. It extends to campaigns against advertising and consumerism and the fight for greater access to the political process. Finally, there is a role to be fulfilled by the research psychologist. This role is to explore the detailed questions of how young people experience the new identities, which the work of other disciplines bear on, but fail to take up directly. It would seem that there is also a role for the psychologist in exploring the "post-identity" experiences of youth who have not been required to make meaning out of everything. How are we to know that such people may not be on the "new frontier of human sentience and perception?" (Coupland, 1996, p.182)

The Recycling of Identity

In light of the inability to arrive at a complete and certain picture of youth identity, I suggest a metaphor in place of the beginnings of a new theory. The process of recycling encompasses many of the ideas that have been expressed in this thesis. The notion of identity as something that is being recycled suggests that its old components (e.g., authenticity) are being converted into "new" forms to meet the needs of the present. These "new" forms bear the marks of both its transformation process as well as its original material. Thus the final product is one in which old components are not entirely dissolved. Their influence can still be seen in the new product: former shapes and functions exert limits on the form and function of the recycled item. The meanings of traits like coherence exert limits on the new identity (e.g., collages or stories), as do the satisfying and unsatisfying experiences that can be had of such traits. Experiences with consistency, for example, function to "ground" the protean self.

A recycled identity can be dynamic but not necessarily always in flux. It is not just original, recycl*able* material that can be combined into new forms but also objects that are already the products of recycled materials. Thus a recycled product is a complete, functioning item in its current form, that constantly carries the capacity for transformation. It is not something that we pronounce as "dead", just because it lacks an immutable, essential character.

Eric referred to recycling as something he wishes he did not have to worry about. His comment reflects his longing for a more stable and predictable set of conditions under which to live. Having to prepare the trash for recycling, out of fears about further destruction of the environment, is unlikely to be most people's first choice for ways of living. However, in light of the conditions we are saddled with, recycling is, at least, a constructive alternative to landfills. It may be more work, but it may prove more satisfying that dumping everything into the garbage. Similarly, postmodern forms of self-construction may be more work than other routes to identity. Yet recycling your self is, at least, a more promising alternative to letting outside forces completely determine who you are. And as the literal recycling that may symbolize our future (retro, raves and sampling) suggests, it may even be fun.

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